



# Things Past

Newsletter 113

May 2019

PO Box 289 Mt Evelyn Vic 3796

Incorporation Number: A0051327F

## Dates for Your Diary

**Visit Schwerkolt Cottage and Mullum Mullum Gorge**, Saturday 18 May. Meet at Schwerkolt Cottage at 2 pm (Melway 49 D7).

**AEHS Conference**, Saturday 22nd June, at Karralyka Centre, Ringwood. Contact Russ Haines. [president@rhs.org.au](mailto:president@rhs.org.au).

**Meeting**, Saturday 21 July, 1:30 – 3:30 pm at Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn. John Keane will lead a round table discussion: historical topics in our area, starting with the plane crash in Colchester Road.

*Meetings are 3rd Mondays of even months, 7:30 pm at Hardy House for General Business Meetings, and 3rd Saturdays at 1:30 pm on odd months (except January) for speaker/activity. Dates are subject to speaker availability and other factors.*

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## Polkinghorne Meets Falkingham ... and the Rest is Mt Evelyn History

### Mt Evelyn Brass Band



Avenue of Honour, 1937

Band Master: Bill King

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## **Polkinghorne Meets Falkingham ... and the Rest is Mt Evelyn History**

In 1929-30, Mt Evelyn residents waited for the mail in the Post Office after its arrival on the train. A cluster of residents gathered while the Post Mistress, Miss Snowball, called out the names as she sorted the letters. She sang out 'Polkinghorne' and Eileen May Falkingham stepped forward, thinking the name was 'Falkingham'. William Joseph Polkinghorne also stepped forward. *'I don't know whether they fought over the letter or not, but they met at the Mt Evelyn Post Office and the rest was history.'* Eileen and William married and had six children, Reg, Shirley, Nancy, Bill, Lorraine and Royce.

Eileen was from a family originally from Yorkshire but who had been living in Abbotsford and Clifton Hill. Her great grandfather, Jonathon Falkingham, had been a wealthy 'railway contractor but the 1890s Depression brought him to heel. The Government owed them money for contracts so they had a big come-down in lifestyle.' Most of his sons remained with the railways, but Eileen's grandfather, Alfred Falkingham, 'came to Mt Evelyn as a road construction foreman and built a lot of roads around here.' The history of railway and road work gave Eileen and her family horse riding skills, as horses were used in much of the construction and for transport to worksites.

In her young days Eileen Falkingham obtained work as a Monday to Friday live-in housekeeper at some of the bigger farms in Wandin, working with her brother at the same farm.

The Polkinghorns had also been in Australia since the late nineteenth century. Reg's grandfather, miner John Polkinghorne, came from Cornwall to Walhalla to work on the goldmines in 1895. He moved to Northcote in 1916. *'It was the suburb to be at in those days, with a young family.'* *'It was a new model Collingwood.'* Reg's father, William Joseph, got training as a metal polisher in the 1920s. William's brother Harold arrived in Mt Evelyn about 1928 to work on the Silvan Dam, and William lived there with him, obtaining work strawberry picking or wood cutting, before having the fateful meeting with Eileen Falkingham at the Post Office.

William and Eileen began raising their children in Mt Evelyn in a shack below Falkingham Road, on Railway Road. (It is thought that Railway Road

had been named in anticipation of the railway line going from Clegg Road, past the bottom of York Road, near the bridge and Recreation Reserve, through Montrose and Kilsyth. A substantial number of small homes were built in expectation of the railway using this route instead of the ultimate route through Mooroolbark to Lilydale.)

The family enjoyed their free life in Mt Evelyn with their own cow and chooks, but William, during the Depression, had to travel to Collingwood for work in Beveridges' box factory. The family relocated to Croxton, then Fairfield in 1933 or 1934, returning to Mt Evelyn when William was able to buy a block of land.

*'Dad's work wasn't good. He didn't really like factory work but that was all he could do at that stage. ... the boss was the boss and you had to work for a boss.'* Both parents must have approved the return to Mt Evelyn, disliking the urban housing and the crowds,

*'because they didn't come back to much. In the early days it was just one big room with partitions in it: a bedroom, a kitchen and the rest of it was pretty much open, I think ... Like all those times, when another member of the family came along, it was enlarged. It had a verandah which became a bedroom. I think it was about an acre and three quarters, enough to run a few things. I know they had nothing when they married. It couldn't have cost much ... a couple of pounds down and payments for the rest of your life!'*

William continued to travel to Melbourne for work. With several other men he rode a pushbike to Lilydale station, then caught the train. Later they were able to car pool.

Reg's first memories are of the late 1930s and the war time. Holiday makers frequented the Olinda Creek below their home to visit the Falls and old swimming hole via a track down the side of Quinn Crescent. The bottom part of the falls was natural but the top part had been modified. Someone had put in a waterwheel many years before. Each year the Falkingham boys would clean it up.

*'It wouldn't be rare (also) to see six to eight different scout groups all along the Olinda Creek. It was something of a night to hear them all sitting around the campfire and hear them*

cont'd p.8

## Growing up in Mt Evelyn

### The Aqueduct

The Aqueduct ran behind my house in North Avenue (Dad still lives there today). We always knew it as 'The Channel'. The Channel was made of concrete with steep sloping walls and a flat bottom.

As children (I have three sisters) we used the track beside the Channel to walk to the shops in Mt Evelyn. We were always warned by our parents not to go near the edge of the Channel as the steep concrete walls and fast current would have made getting out nearly impossible and you would probably drown. I was also told there were no fish in the Channel, as a way to discourage me from throwing a line in.

From behind our home directly across the Channel were the View Street houses that backed on to the Channel. The only safe way to cross the Channel was to walk to York Road where it would go through a tunnel under the road, or walk to the end near Joy Avenue where the Channel went underground to the other side of Silvan Road.

There was however another way and if my Mum had found out what we did she would have flipped. Every so often there would be a steel pipe about 6 or 8 inches in diameter that crossed from one side of the Channel to the other. I suspect now that these may have been drainage pipes from a trench that ran parallel to the Channel on the View Street high side to keep storm water run-off out of the Channel (you can



still see evidence of the trench today). At some point as a child you will attempt to do some pretty stupid things. I can't remember

which one of us first came up with the idea of crawling across these pipes to the other side, just too be able to say 'I did it'. I don't think I was the first to do it, but I can remember inching my way across to the encouragement (or was it peer group pressure?) of the others. Fortunately no

one fell and after a while we became quite confident at doing it without any fear. However I never got confident enough to walk across the pipe and, although it was discussed, I'm not sure if anyone did it.

### The decommissioning of the Channel

When I was 12, I came home from school one day to find everyone talking about the water in the Channel disappearing. With some of my friends we went and had a look. Sure enough the Channel was down to a trickle. This was the first time in my life I had ever seen this. We noticed people jumping in to the Channel with buckets to catch fish that were becoming stranded. (I'd been lied to; there *were* fish in the Channel).

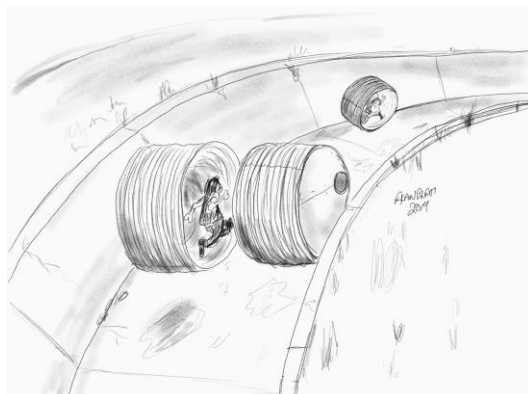
Quickly we raced off and got our own buckets and were soon catching fish. The best place was where the pipe under Joy Avenue emerged and the Channel commenced. There was a sump area at this place which had trapped lots of fish. I think they were Black fish. We caught a few, but I don't know what we did with them. Possibly we gave them away; we were just up for the fun of catching them.

Over the next days we went exploring the empty Channel and the pipes. This became our new playground. We explored the pipe that went under Silvan Road near where the Joy Avenue Kinder is now located. You could walk through it to the other side. The first time we did it seemed to take for ever, probably because it felt quite eerie walking through a pipe that a few days earlier had a solid flow of water hurtling through it. It didn't help when we were in the middle of the tunnel and someone would say 'what if they turned the water back on for some reason'. They didn't, thankfully, and with wet feet we emerged on the other side of Silvan Road.

On the way back we discovered we could accurately gauge our progress through the pipe by comparing the size of the circles of light coming through the ends of the pipe. Once they were the same size we knew were half way. Of course in those days as kids, we didn't have torches and even if you did, you couldn't afford the batteries. (Do I sound like an old person?) There was the other pipe that ran under Joy Avenue that you couldn't see through, so we only went into that one as far as the light would allow. Imagine this happening today! Everything would be closed off with fencing straight away.

The pipes were open for a long time before the authorities finally blocked them off.

For some reason, after the Channel was decommissioned, some people from View Street discarded their corrugated water tanks into the channel. I think it was to do with these houses being now able to connect to the mains. Our side (North Avenue) had always been on mains water as far as I remember. Whatever the reason, we didn't care, as suddenly we had discovered the best fun ever! We found that two of these discarded tanks when sat on the round side could



fit side by side in the bottom of the Channel. We were then able to get inside them and like a mouse in a wheel we could run-around and propel them down the empty Channel at speed. We were soon having races and crashing into each other. Also we would jump from one to other when the tanks were side by side.

Regularly they would start riding up the sloping edge of the Channel, usually when there was a bend, and end up tipping over onto the flat side of the tank. This was OK if you kept yourself inside the tank as it went over so nothing would get chopped off you.

There were two types of tanks. Some of them had a fully open top and the others had a closed over top with just a man hole in it. If you were in the open type and it tipped over, depending on the side it landed on you would decide the technique for righting it. If the open side was facing the sky you would simply climb over, get out and with the help of others tip it back up. If it landed the other way, you had to get your fingers under the edge and lift it up high enough, with help, and crawl out, then tip it back up.

The enclosed types were a little more of a challenge if the tank landed on the manhole side. This technique involved standing in the manhole and lifting the tank up around you. If there were two of you in the tank, as often there would be, both of you couldn't fit in the manhole and lift and the other person's weight would make it too hard to lift. The second person would need to go to the opposite side in the tank and lean as much as possible against the side as the first person

lifted the tank by the manhole. Once you lifted past its centre of gravity it would suddenly land with a crash, righted, and the person still inside lying in a heap. Amazingly no one ever got hurt. I can't imagine the fun police of today allowing kids to play in this environment. Mind you, I don't think our parents knew what we were up to.

Over time the Channel was filled in and the pipes were blocked off permanently. The only thing that remained for a long time was the tunnel under York Road. It was the same shape as the Channel and had a bend in it.

It is a shame that it wasn't able to be retained for an underpass today for people using the Aqueduct Trail to cross York Road safely.

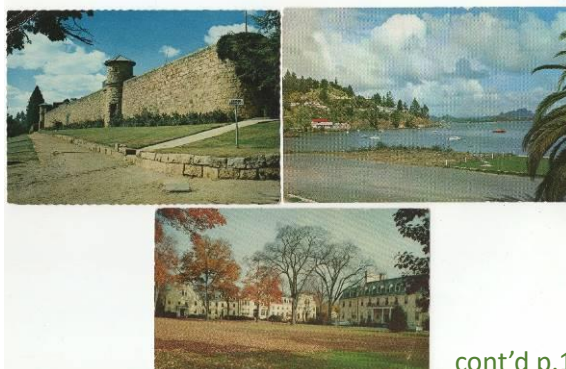
**Alan Platt**

## Postcards Donated

In an earlier article ('Postcards to Beryl', *Things Past* #111), we mentioned the chance discovery of some postcards sent to, and by, the late D. Beryl Phillips from the 1950s to the 1970s. Trudie McMullen had found the cards in the shop at the old gaol in Wentworth, NSW, and tracked us down via our newsletter articles online.

Trudie and her daughters subsequently visited, and very kindly donated the cards to the History Group.

There are seven cards in all, the majority sent from friends in the United States to Beryl at various addresses: New Jersey, Launceston, and Melbourne. They reveal a friendship network of teachers, ministers of religion, and others engaged in the helping professions, or studying to do so.



cont'd p.10

## County Names in Victoria

The history of Victoria's counties goes back to the early days of settlement, when Port Phillip was still part of New South Wales.<sup>1</sup>

In April 1837, Richard Bourke, Governor of NSW, visited the Port Phillip district. A communique sent back to Sydney stated that the County of Bourke (which included Melbourne) was laid out under His Excellency's direction.<sup>2</sup> I cannot trace a proclamation date but, by July 1838, a Court of Petty Sessions was announced to be 'holden at Melbourne in the County of Bourke, near Port Phillip'.<sup>3</sup> The County of Grant (the Geelong area) was mentioned in the *NSW Government Gazette* on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1838 and the County of Normanby (around Portland) on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1840.

Governor Fitz Roy proclaimed 13 new counties of Port Phillip on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1848. Most were named after titled British MPs with no connection to the Australian colonies. The proclamation was published in a supplement to the *NSW Government Gazette*<sup>4</sup> the following day and in the *Port Phillip Gazette* on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1849. Grant and Normanby were included in the list, so they may be taken as confirmed at this date. The counties (in the order of the proclamation, roughly from west to east) were Follett, Dundas, Normanby, Villiers, Ripon, Hampden, Heytesbury, Polwarth, Grenville, Grant, Talbot, Dalhousie, Anglesey, Evelyn and Mornington. In addition, seven proposed counties in Gippsland (Douro, Bass, Haddington, Bruce, Abinger, Combermere and Howe) were listed in the newspaper report. These seven 'ghost counties' appeared on a map of eastern Victoria dated 1852, but apparently never came into effect.<sup>5</sup>

Another county, Rodney, was first mentioned in 1853 and was in effect by 1856, but we have no proclamation date. The County of Bendigo was

proclaimed in 1869, the County of Gladstone in 1870, and 18 counties with Aboriginal names in 1871. Among these were the Gippsland counties, which were re-surveyed (leaving five instead of seven) and re-named. The Commissioner of Lands, Mr Macpherson, and the Surveyor-General, chose the names, 'naming the counties which hitherto have been nameless'.<sup>6</sup>

Below is an alphabetical list of the 37 Victorian counties, dates of proclamation and name origins.

**Anglesey**, 1848. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Anglesey was a hero of the Battle of Waterloo and Second in Command to the Duke of Wellington. The family seat is on the island of Anglesey, off the coast of Wales.<sup>7</sup>

**Benambra**, 1871. Aboriginal word meaning 'mountain'.

**Bendigo**, 1869. The city of Bendigo. The locality 'was named by Tom Myers, Heap and Grice's overseer, in 1841. Tom himself was a bit of a dab with his fists, and a great admirer of the boxer Bendigo, hence the name.' The bare-knuckle boxer 'Bendigo' was an Englishman, William Thomson, whose nickname derived from the Biblical name 'Abednego'.<sup>8</sup>

**Bogong**, 1871. From Ngarigu *bugung*, brown moth. 'Bogong ... is a mountainous country, and is resorted to by the natives for the purpose of procuring a large white headed grub, on which they feed, the native name for which is Bogong.'

**Borong**, 1871. Aboriginal word meaning 'a broad large lagoon'.

**Bourke**, in effect by 1838. Sir Richard Bourke was Governor of NSW from 1831 to 1837.

**Buln Buln**, 1871. Woi wurrung word meaning 'lyrebird'.

**Croajingolong**, 1871. From Ganai *galung* 'belonging to', and *kraua* 'east', the name for the

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<sup>1</sup> Counties have no political function, but some county names were/are used for Victorian electoral districts and local government areas.

<sup>2</sup> *The Sydney Monitor*, 10<sup>th</sup> April 1837. The report mentions 'counties of William and Melbourne'. Nothing further is heard of these as county names but the towns of Williamstown and Melbourne were named at this time.

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/32155566>

<sup>3</sup> *The Colonist*, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1838, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/31721378>

<sup>4</sup> <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/230151574/14255790>

<sup>5</sup> Cadastral Divisions of Victoria, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadastral\\_divisions\\_of\\_Victoria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cadastral_divisions_of_Victoria)

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<sup>6</sup> 'Names of Counties', *Bendigo Advertiser* 31<sup>st</sup> January 1871, reprinted from *The Age*. Meanings of Aboriginal names given here come from this article,

<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/87967164>, and from Clark & Heydon (see note 9).

<sup>7</sup> Information on aristocratic families comes from 'The Peerage', <http://www.thepeerage.com/> and Wikipedia.

<sup>8</sup> *Australian Town & Country Journal*, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1878, <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/70595069>; *Bendigo Advertiser*, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017, <https://www.bendigoadvertiser.com.au/story/4982945/the-origin-of-the-name-bendigo/>

clans occupying the territory bounded by the Snowy and Tambo Rivers and the Tasman Sea.<sup>9</sup>

**Dalhousie**, 1848. 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess Dalhousie, Scottish statesman, Governor-General of India 1848-1856.

**Dargo**, 1871. Named from the Dargo River, in turn from a Ganai word, 'to have patience, to wait'.

**Delatite**, 1871. A Daung wurrung personal name, applied to one of the tributaries of the River Goulburn.

**Dundas**, 1848. Sir David Dundas became Commander-in-Chief of the British Army in 1809.

**Evelyn**, 1848. John Evelyn (1620-1706) was a famous diarist and pioneer arboriculturalist. The head of

the family in 1848 was William John Evelyn, later MP for Surrey West 1849-1857 and Deptford 1885-1888. He had not yet been elected to parliament when the county was named, but at least seven family members had served as MPs.

**Follett**, 1848. Sir William Webb Follett (1796-1845), MP for Exeter, twice served as British Solicitor-General and was appointed Attorney-General in 1844.

**Gladstone**, 1870. William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) served four terms as British Prime Minister.

**Grant**, 1848, in effect by 1839. Lieutenant James Grant (1772-1833) was a naval officer. Commanding the 'Lady Nelson' in 1800, he was the first to traverse Bass Strait from west to east.<sup>10</sup>

**Grenville**, 1848. George Grenville (1712-1770) was British Prime Minister from 1763 to 1765. William Wyndham Grenville (1759-1834), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Grenville, was Prime Minister from 1806 to 1807.

**Gunbower**, 1871. A Baraba Baraba name, thought to derive from *gambowra*, meaning 'twisting'. Gunbower Creek is an anabranch of the

Murray. The Gunbower pastoral station was occupied from about 1845.

**Hampden**, 1848. Possibly named after the 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Hampden (1706-1783), who was ambassador to the United Provinces.

**Heytesbury**, 1848. Sir William à Court (1779-1860), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Heytesbury, was a politician and diplomat. He served as Ambassador to Russia and was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1844-1846. The Australian Holmes à Court family is a branch of this aristocratic family.

**Kara Kara**, 1871. A Djadja wurrung word meaning 'gold'. The Shire of Kara Kara existed from 1861 till 1994.

**Karkaroc**, 1871. A Wergaia word of uncertain meaning, possibly 'sand'.

**Lowan**, 1871. A western Kulin word for the Mallee Fowl.

**Millewa**, 1871. From the western Kulin name for the Murray River.

**Moira**, 1871. From a Yorta Yorta word meaning 'a lake' or 'sea'; alternatively, 'a reedy swamp'.

**Mornington**, 1848. Named after Lord Mornington. The 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Mornington was the father of the Duke of Wellington. The Lord Mornington of 1848 was the 4<sup>th</sup> Earl, a man universally detested.

**Normanby**, 1848, in effect by 1840. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Normanby (1797-1863) served as Governor of Jamaica, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Home Secretary and British Ambassador to France. He was the author of several novels.

**Polwarth**, 1848. The 7<sup>th</sup> Lord Polwarth (1800-1867) was MP for Roxburghshire, Scotland, between 1826 and 1832. He held the offices of Lord Lieutenant, Sheriff Principal of Selkirk and Lord in Waiting.

**Ripon**, 1848. Frederick Robinson, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Ripon, was Prime Minister of Britain from 1827 to 1828.



<sup>9</sup> Ian D. Clark & Tony Heydon 2002, *Dictionary of Aboriginal placenames of Victoria*, Melbourne: VACL.

<sup>10</sup> Australian Dictionary of Biography, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/grant-james-2117>

## Carved Chestnut Tree

We mentioned Mr James Lindsay Low (father-in-law of our late member Nancy Low) in issues #3a (February 2008 supplement) and #4. Mr Low, who had a greengrocer's shop on the corner of Monbulk and York Roads, was on the inaugural committee of the Mt Evelyn Recreation Reserve and was founding President of the Football Club. He and his family planted the chestnut trees beside the oval at the Recreation Reserve in 1929. Originally there were seven trees, as one was planted for each of Mr Low's seven children.

In 2017, when one of the five remaining trees was affected by termites and was earmarked for removal, the Mount Evelyn Environment Protection & Progress Association (MEEPPA) suggested preserving the tree as a sculpture representing the local wildlife.



**Carved Chestnut Tree**

Yarra Valley sculptor Rob Bast did the carving. The project was jointly funded by MEEPPA, Melbourne Water and Yarra Ranges Council. The sculpture was installed at the Recreation Reserve in April. From top of sculpture, the animals carved are:

- Powerful Owl – critically endangered
- Greater Glider – critically endangered and last reported in area in early 1970s.
- Galah in top hollow – common
- Possum/ Ringtail or Brush Tailed – common
- Boobook Owl (smaller Owl in hollow) – threatened
- Eastern (or Barred) Bandicoot – critically endangered on mainland, rediscovered only last year after extensive replanting of Tramway Road – not previously reported since the mid-1960s.

Since the sculpture is a tribute to the land and/or arboreal animals, it was felt that one of the main elements of the Reserve could not be ignored – Olinda Creek and its floodplain, which the lower Reserve actually forms part of, along with the billabong.

In recognition of this, Clare Worsnop and Franc Smith have created mosaics on each face of the concrete base, celebrating the special riparian and rare water based animals which have also been discovered (and re-discovered) along Olinda Creek. Each face is dedicated to a unique animal. All appear in the Fauna and Flora Guarantee Act.

Face – Dandenong Creek Amphipod *Austrogammarus australis* – only found in the Olinda and Kallista Creeks and recently reported from Dandenong Creek.

Right face – Giant Water Spider *Megadolomedes australianus*, in leg span Victoria's largest spider and first discovered only four years ago.

Rear – Wingless Olinda Creek Stonefly *Plecoptera Sp.*, described by a university study group from Montreal Canada and only found twice since – endemic to Olinda Creek.

Left face – The Platypus.

They are all native to Mount Evelyn. The Stonefly is endemic, as might be the Amphipod, since they are so hard to find and study. These animals are extremely important indicators to the potability of Olinda Creek, since they require 99.7% oxygen retention without any nutrient invasion. That is why it is so important to keep the lower picnic area free of disturbance, realignment and especially re-sowing with exotic grasses such as Kikuyu.



**The Powerful Owl**

The sculpture is surrounded by a mound that will be planted out with low growing plants.

We all hope the sculpture becomes a tribute to the unique and special natural heritage Mount Evelyn is fortunate to have.

**From Franc Smith. Photos Kevin Phillips**

## Polkinghorne Meets Falkingham ...

from p.2

*singing ... They went for walks around the area and up the mountain.'*

Day trippers also went to the Recreation Reserve. In winter, snow trippers would stop by on their way to Donna Buang in their picnic vans. At Christmas and Easter time big companies from Melbourne, such as Brockhoffs (Biscuits), would have picnics there with cricket matches, merry go rounds, women's races. *'And it was our job to get down there when they were handing out ice-creams and lollies. We'd join the queue! I think that sometimes they knew that we were ring-ins but they were good enough to give us something.*

*On the weekends different friends and relatives would come up and we would do plenty of walks. The Cascades was one of the attractions and so was Brother Bill's National Fitness Camp. 'At odd times they would let us swim in the pool ... it was a concrete pool but the water would come out of the creek. It did get pretty murky at times ... and it was always freezing cold in the summer. A harder walk was to walk up the mountain to the Observatory, a pretty long day.'*

As Grandfather Falkingham had worked on the Silvan Dam they knew that area *'back to front'*, walking through the bush there. They also went right around the creeks and up the mountain, ferreting to catch rabbits. *'We'd sell some rabbits but mainly it was for eating them. Stewed rabbit wasn't too bad but stewed rabbit, stewed rabbit, stewed rabbit, wasn't too good. You got sick of it.'*

For recreation the adults played euchre. Another night's entertainment was to listen to the old crystal radio. *'Someone had to climb up the trees to put the aerial 100 feet high and God knows how long, and have another big wire coming into the house, and all you got was a screechy, scratchy noise. But old Grandfather Falkingham would have his earphones on and he'd be listening to the cricket broadcast and he'd be rebroadcasting it, telling who was in and who was out.'*

The Falkinghams and Polkinghorne were also involved with music and the arts. *'Albie Falkingham was right into theatre. He used to go to plays at the Tivoli, then act them out at home*

*with friends. He also did shadow plays behind a sheet.'* The Mt Evelyn Brass band included many of the two families' members.



**Mt Evelyn Brass Band 1934**

Most of the Falkingham boys and girls were fans of dancing. There were dances at Silvan, Monbulk, Lilydale and Sassafras. Then around 1939, the Do Drop In on the corner of Swansea and York Roads built a dancing hall. People *'came from everywhere'* for their dances and it was a *'big night'*. *'Mum, Dad and the Falkingham boys who could dance would be running down there with a hurricane lamp to cross the creek on their log, around past the Falls. Sometimes they started off in their good clothes and other times they slipped in the creek and had to come home and change.'*

During the war the army commandeered Brother Bill's National Fitness Camp at the Recreation Reserve. They had a Medical Unit there and *'Americans came and stayed there ... perhaps 50 at a time. It was some sort of medical training course'* as *'they used to do simulations of accidents. They had Bren gun carriers and they'd get them right up in the bush with them. They'd have someone supposedly trapped underneath and get up there to extract them and all that sort of thing – put bandages on them from head to toe.'*

**Janice Newton, from an Interview with Reg Polkinghorne, 26 September 1995.**



## The 1983 Fire

Jean and David Edwards located these photos taken after the fire that swept up from Kookaburra Lane in 1983, a few days before the Ash Wednesday bushfires.

Several houses were destroyed, including the original 'Nether Wallop' and the hilltop home of baker Ted Matthews off Old Hereford Road. Two of the photos were taken on a property in Kookaburra Lane where a brick house was saved.



The third photo shows where the fire was stopped at the MMBW property at the top of Old Hereford Road (where the water supply tank now stands). Burnt trees can be seen in the background.



**Photos David Edwards, 13 February 1983.**

## County Names in Victoria from p.6

**Rodney**, in effect by 1856. George Brydges Rodney (1718-1792), 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Rodney of Rodney Stoke in Somerset, was a British naval officer, best known for his commands in the American War of Independence.

**Talbot**, 1848. The Talbots were Earls of Shrewsbury. Irish-born William Talbot (c.1784-1845) established the Malahide pastoral holding in the Fingal Valley, Van Diemen's Land.<sup>11</sup>

**Tambo**, 1871. From the Ganai name for Mt Tambo, meaning 'perch' (fish).

**Tanjil**, 1871. From a Ganai word meaning 'snow, frost', applied to Mt Tanjil. There is also evidence that *tanjil* was a Woi wurrung name for the La Trobe River.

**Tatchera**, 1871. Aboriginal word meaning 'a large plain'.

**Villiers**, 1848. An aristocratic family, holding numerous titles. George Child Villiers, 6<sup>th</sup> Earl of Jersey, was a British MP who held various seats between 1830 and 1852.

**Weeah**, 1871. 'The scrub from which natives extract water in the periods of the severest drought.'

**Wonnangatta**, 1871. Aboriginal name, probably Ganai, for the headwaters of the Mitchell River.

Almost all of the counties from the colonial period were named for British 'statesmen and belted earls',<sup>12</sup> with a nod to maritime exploration (Grant, Bass and Howe). Counties named following Separation from NSW in 1851 reflect the environment, the rivers, Aboriginal heritage, gold, and a regional city built on gold: evidence for an emerging Victorian identity.

**Map p.6: the Counties of Victoria 1877, Wikipedia.**

**Karen Phillips**

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<sup>11</sup> 'Companion to Tasmanian History, [http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion\\_to\\_tasmanian\\_history/T/Talbot%20family.htm](http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/T/Talbot%20family.htm)

<sup>12</sup> A.S. Kenyon, 'Origin of Victorian Place Names', *The Argus*, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1938.

## Yarra Valley Vietnam Veterans

The latest book by Anthony McAleer OAM, *Yarra Valley Vietnam Veterans*, was launched in August 2018.

The book, which is arranged chronologically, spans the period 1964 to 1972. Each section has an introduction by the author, giving the historical background. The rest is told in the soldiers' own words.

The opening chapter 'Before Vietnam' gives biographical details of each of the 16 servicemen up to the time they enlisted or were called up. Some were in the regular Army or Navy before the war, some were members of the Citizens Military Forces and volunteered for service in Vietnam, others were National Service conscripts. At least five had connections, past or present, to Mt Evelyn.

Subsequent chapters document their experiences travelling, arriving and 'in country'. It is not only the major events of the war that are covered but the nitty gritty detail that makes you feel you're there: the heat and humidity, the tropical creepy-crawlies, the vehicles, weapons and equipment, interaction with the Vietnamese and the Americans, and the experience of being on patrol in the jungle.

'You get a sixth sense after a while, you get it after the first couple of operations ... This particular morning we had 'Stand To' and after the sun rose we stood down ... and we started getting our breakfast. Without any of us saying anything to each other we all stopped doing what we were doing at once, we all grabbed our rifles, we laid down in a defensive position and no one said a word. We laid there motionless, I reckon for about eight to twelve minutes, and next minute the Vietcong came in. They knew someone was there, just the same as we knew someone was coming ... that was the senses that had been developed without our realizing.' (Bombardier Roger Boness, 106<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery).

The chapter 'Coming Home' records the often disorganized official arrangements that greeted them, on their return to Australia and the indifference or outright hostility they encountered from the nation that had been so

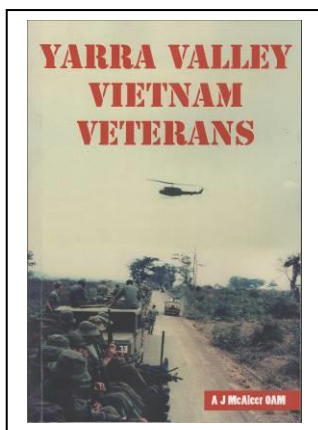
keen to send them. Most never discussed their Vietnam experiences, except with their fellow veterans. One of the saddest aspects was the waste of potential.

'They came to a society that didn't value what these men brought back and what they could bring to the table. Society didn't do anything with their knowledge, with their experience or their capability, all of it was wasted.' (Sgt Ken Mackenzie, 104<sup>th</sup> Signal Squadron).

Rather than reading the book straight through, I found it even more engaging to follow the recollections of each of the men in turn (a table of contents and a name index would have been helpful here). Greg Carrick's excellent photos are a feature of the book. Each of the veterans is pictured holding a photo of himself in the Vietnam years.

Thank you to the veterans for sharing their stories (for the first time, in some cases) and to Anthony McAleer for compiling them. Nothing can compare with the accounts of those who were there.

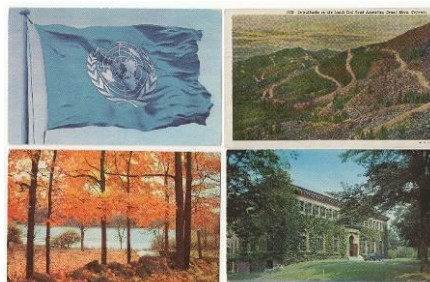
*Yarra Valley Vietnam Veterans* is priced at \$35 and is available from the Mt Evelyn RSL.



## Postcards Donated from p.4

One, attending the Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Massachusetts, mentions her difficulty in learning phonetics while surrounded by American accents. Another, writing from Hartford Seminary, Connecticut, where Beryl had previously studied, says that Beryl is well remembered and that a gift she had made to the library was appreciated.

Two correspondents remind Beryl of the beauty of the autumn foliage in New England.



Thank you to Trudie for giving us the cards as a reminder of our late History Group member and community leader.

## Vale Helen Margaret Summerscales (known as 'Nell' )

Nell was the daughter of Thomas and Bessie Hillard, who had a property in Borang Avenue, Mt Evelyn. She was born in Richmond, Victoria, on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1919.



Nell moved to Mt Evelyn after the Second World War and then her first husband, Leslie, passed away in 1951. Nell met Keith Summerscales and they married in 1953.

The Mt Evelyn Football Club was a big part of Nell's life, where she ran the canteen and helped out wherever she could. The club fittingly made her a Life Member for all her years of contribution. Nell loved football, as her brother played for the 'Lions', and she never missed a game. Every Saturday Auntie Nell would walk through our place to get to the Recreation Reserve for the footy.

Nell went to England to visit family. One of her good friends lived next door to Elton John's family home and by coincidence Nell became good friends with Elton's mum Sheila. Through the years they wrote to each other and would catch up when travelling.

Nell was my neighbour. I called her Auntie Nell, as you did back then. She knew me from when I was born, as my parents moved to Mt Evelyn in 1951.

Nell taught me to knit when I was young, as my mum only crocheted. Nell knew everything about knitting and could knit without even looking. I even remember how she answered her telephone, saying, 'Mt Evelyn 341'. We didn't have a phone till many years later so Nell would let us use hers.

Nell was a very talented Florist and I remember the gorgeous 'sprays' and 'sheaths' of flowers she made. I always wanted to be a Florist and would watch her and ask questions. I probably annoyed her some of the time. She would often be making wreaths for Heritages, as she knew them well and Uncle Keith sometimes drove for them.

When I got married in 1971, Auntie Nell said she would take care of the wedding cars for me, so

she called up Heritages and arranged for their two grey Chevrolets they used for their funerals, plus drivers. They were very swish and transformed with their flowers and doll adorning the back window, and all for the grand sum of \$25 ... one would never had guessed that they were anything BUT wedding cars.

All in all, Auntie Nell was a great neighbor. I know she would be humbled if she was here to read this but I feel she deserves recognition as she was a well-known identity in Mt Evelyn, having associated with a lot of people there and especially with the footy club.

In later life Auntie Nell lived close to me here in Lilydale and I remember her telling me about the gorgeous red garnet cross she used to wear, evidently it was a gift from Elton John's mother Sheila. I took her to lunch one day in Ringwood and sure enough we had to go in to Bunnings and, as she loved flowers, we came out with two more plants for her garden.

Auntie Nell told me she wanted to live to 100 to receive a letter from the Queen. Sadly she did not make it by only a few months and passed away on Valentine's Day.

I will always have special memories of the lady and neighbour I called 'the knitting expert', Auntie Nell.



**Photos: Nell with Mary, 1950s; Nell in later life.**

### *Mary Golds*

## Vale Reg Kenealy

Reg Kenealy of Marysville has passed away in his ninetieth year. With his wife Mary, Reg was a tireless worker for local history of Marysville and district for more than 20 years. Their work in the aftermath of Black Saturday was outstanding, as shown by their appearances on the ABC and at the Bushfires Royal Commission (see the documentary 'Reg and Mary | Black Saturday | Australian Broadcasting Corporation').

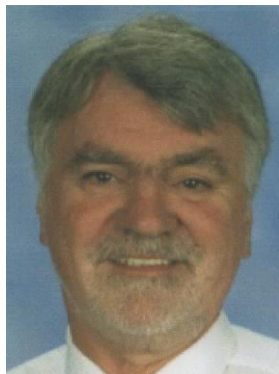
Reg and Mary were given Awards of Merit by the RHSV in 2013.

## Vale Tom O'Meara, Educator and Mentor

The sudden death of Tom O'Meara on 18 March came as a shock to the local history community.

Thomas Brian O'Meara was born in Preston on 12 September 1948, the second of three boys. He attended the local school, where he showed academic promise. He then attended a school run by the Presentation nuns and received a scholarship to the Christian Brothers' College.

At the age of 20 Tom was called up for National Service, but was permitted to defer while he completed his degree at the University of Melbourne. Teaching would be his career, but first he had to fulfil his National Service obligations. It was while he was doing his basic training that he met his future wife, Rhonda, another teacher. Tom served in Vietnam and Papua New Guinea with the Education unit of the Australian Army. This was in the early 1970s, when conscripts were



no longer being sent into combat. After Tom and Rhonda moved to Mooroolbark, Tom began a long association with Pembroke College (now Yarra Hills) as teacher and Principal, first at the Cambridge Road Campus and then at Mt Evelyn. He believed every child had the right to a good education and was capable of learning. He never gave up on any student, even the most difficult. He was a good friend and mentor to the staff.

After his retirement Tom devoted himself to local history. He was President of the Upper Yarra Historical Society, the Association of Eastern Historical Societies and the Yarra Ranges Heritage Network. Recently he steered the *Guide to Heritage in the Yarra Ranges* through to publication.

Tom will be sorely missed by the local history groups in Yarra Ranges, and by his many past colleagues, students and their parents. Our sympathy to Tom's family for their loss.

<b>From Kev's Rain Gauge</b>				
Rainfall (in mm) for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, and Melbourne for the last three months.				
	Feb-19	Mar-19	Apr-19	YTD
Mt Evelyn	17.7	73.8	27.6	144.0
McKillop	19.3	84.3	31.5	162.9
Melbourne	18.6	12.0	7.2	49.0

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

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