



Things Past

Newsletter 137

May 2025

Wurundjeri Country

PO Box 289 Mt Evelyn Vic 3796

Incorporation Number A0051327F

Dates for Your Diary

Talk by Marguerita Stephens and Aunty Faye Stewart Muir, *Banbu-deen: The Years of Terror*. Saturday 17 May 2025, at 1:30pm at Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn.

General Business Meeting, Monday 16 June, 2025 at 7:30 pm, at Hardy House.

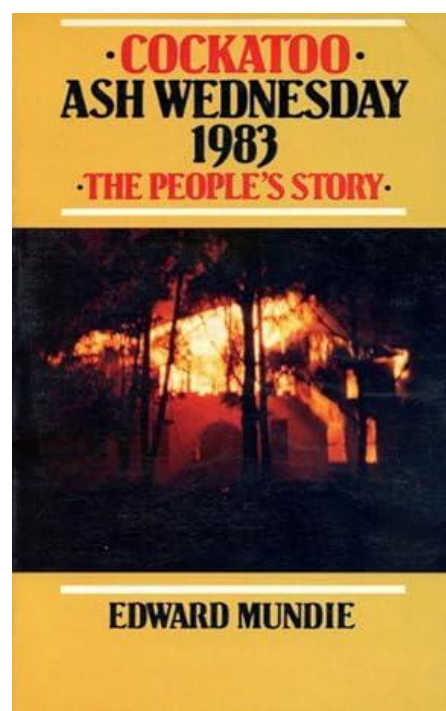
Visit to Yarra Ranges Regional Museum, 35-37 Castella Street, Lilydale. Saturday 19 July 2025. (details TBA).

Meetings are 3rd Mondays of even months, 7:30 pm at Hardy House for General Business Meetings, and speaker and activity times are on alternate months - please check your email inbox.

The Ugly 'Duxling' of Mount Evelyn

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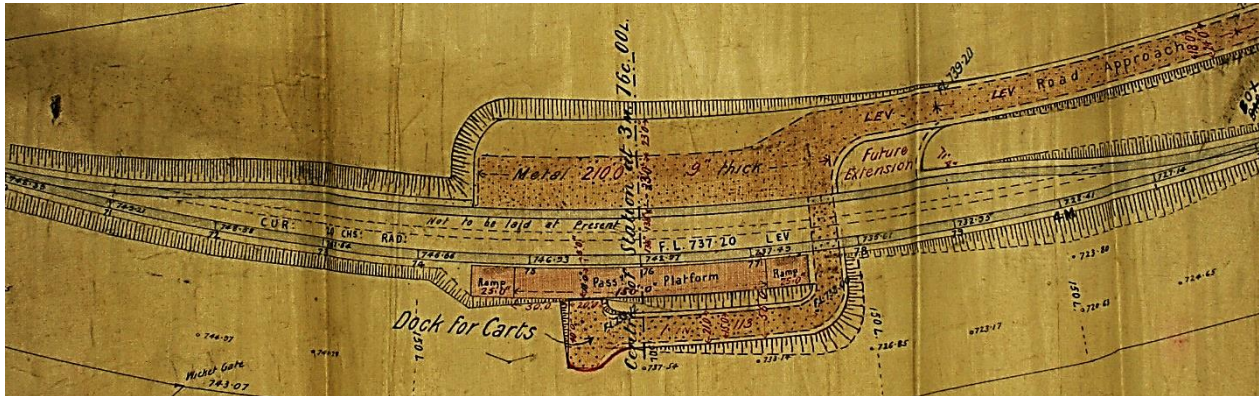
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Cover of Ted Mundie's book Cockatoo Ash Wednesday.

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125 years of the Mt Evelyn Railway Station Platform



The Mt Evelyn Railway Station opened as the Olinda Vale Unattended Platform on 13 November 1901.¹ In this detail of an undated map of the Olinda Vale Station Ground, initialled and dated on each of 17/1/00 and 7/3/00, the platform here is planned to measure 150 ft with 25 ft ramps at each end.² There is no photographic evidence that the ramps were constructed as shown.

Mr W Wykes, an Officer in Charge, was appointed before the station was renamed Evelyn in 1907-8. Assistant Station Masters were appointed until the Station Master's residence was built in 1911, after which Mr O'Connor was the first Resident Stationmaster, appointed in 1913.³



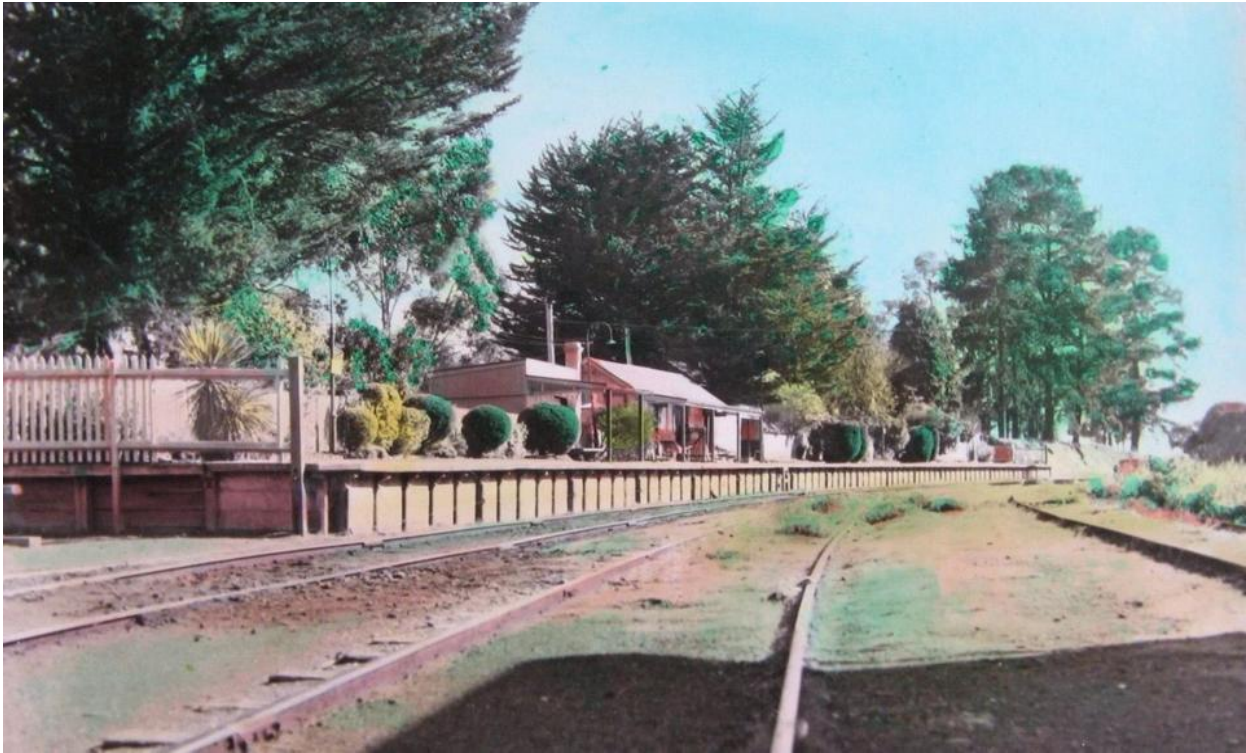
The earliest photographs by Tom Miller, such as this one (c. 1911), show no evidence of ramps.⁴

¹ V-line letter, 29/11/1984.

² Courtesy Mike Foley from his research at the Public Records Office.

³ *Tracks to Trails* (2001) lists this information with references in [Appendix 1: The Railway at Mt Evelyn](#).

⁴ Glass negatives in the possession of MEHG, thanks to restoration by Richard Conn.



The Station in its heyday (undated, c. 1940s).

Following the closure of the Railway Station in 1965, the Station Master's house was reused as the Mt Evelyn Library, and is now the Station House, housing the Mt Evelyn Community House and Reading Room, and the Social Enterprise Tasty Az Catering.

The alignment of the Rail Trail is not the original track alignment, which ran through what is now Bowen's yard and crossed York Road further east of the traffic lights. The Railway land is leased by Bowens, who moved their fence back to allow the Warburton Rail Trail and a reconstructed platform containing several coniferous trees from the original station garden to be established.⁵ This re-alignment is the reason that the corner of the platform protrudes onto the trail.

A well researched and painted set of bollards, overseen by Marg Lopez, was accompanied by information wheels as part of a Work for the Dole project to create the Mt Evelyn Bollard Walk. The platform wall displayed further information wheels, as can be seen in some of the photos.



The platform with the first set of bollards, 2003

The Bollard Walk was visited by Victorian Premier Steve Bracks when he opened the town's Learning Town signs in 2003.

⁵ Two cypresses and an unusual pine (not radiata). Trees between the library and the St John building are possible remnants of the original platform garden.



The Premier Steve Bracks, flanked by (L to R) Heather McTaggart MP for Evelyn, Paula Herlihy, Jan Simmons and Dymphna Beard MP for Kilsyth (2003).

This photo shows the platform on the occasion of the launch of the Mt Evelyn History Group book *The Happy Hermits & Diary of a Trip to Evelyn (2013)*. Early photographer Tom Miller was a member of the 'Happy Hermits', and the book gives the Hermits' context. L to R Paula Herlihy, Bronwyn Higgs, Karen Phillips, Joy Phillips.



Before:

Over time the bollards and wheels fell into disrepair, and the wall was pushed out as shown here. Around 2014 the old bollards were replaced by others with a clown theme, possibly inspired by the circus train but never completed. The Stationmaster figure was re-created.

Photo Joy Phillips (2024)

In 2024 Yarra Ranges Council contacted groups in the town, including MEHG, and held several on-site meetings to talk about the work that could be done to improve the platform area. As this photo shows, the edge was realigned and a piece at the far end of this photo was cut off. Holes on the platform were dug using water blasts to protect roots, and the outcome was highly successful. The wooden sleepers were replaced with cement sleepers.



Photo Joy Phillips

After:



Photo Joy Phillips

The surviving parts of the platform are in two sections, as the centre part was demolished to make the current car park.

While the reconstructed platform project was being carried out, Shire staff headed by Ritchie Donald liaised with community members from the History Group, Township Group and Tasty Az, and heard that the History Group had hopes of both protecting and showcasing the last parts of the original platform. These were hidden in long grass and dangerous as the protuberant pieces of metal were not easily seen.

In Australia historical significance is founded on the existence of tangible remains as described in the Burra Charter. These lumps of reinforced concrete are the oldest Station artefacts located at the site. They are further towards the Birmingham Road pedestrian crossing, down from the Library and the St John building.

Ritchie held several on site meetings, and it was eventually decided to carefully hand excavate the concrete posts, use the wooden sleepers from the previous project to create a wall behind the posts, to further bend back the dangerous metal, and to cap the lot with a new wooden sleeper to protect the posts.



Photo Paula Herlihy



Photo Joy Phillips.

The view looking towards the Old Link and car park has gone from this ...



... to this:



Photo Paula Herlihy

Photo Paula Herlihy

And looking towards Birmingham Road ... some of the posts of the original platform on display.



Mt Evelyn History Group is currently working with Yarra Ranges Council to create an information sign for the Railway Station Site in keeping with the new signs along the Warburton Trail (See *Things Past* #133 p 5).

Paula Herlihy and Karen Phillips.

Photo Paula Herlihy

What to do about Offensive Placenames?

An interesting ABC news article on Chinese place names prompted a flood of comments from Chinese Australian historians and place name experts.⁶ A resident of Penola SA requested a change of name for 'Chinaman's Lane'. He said the racist connotations of 'Chinaman' embarrassed him in his contacts with Asian people.

Penola Council voted unanimously to keep the name, to preserve the history of Chinese market gardeners of the Gold Rush era. 'Chinese market gardeners operated in that area in the 1850s to cater for 19,000 Chinese gold seekers who walked from Robe to the Victorian goldfields in that era so that's why it's so important and Penola was part of that walk', the Mayor said.

Members of Chinese Family Historians of Victoria (CAFHOV) took the side of preserving history, though they differed on their preferred means. Some were glad the name 'Chinaman's Lane' had been retained. Others thought history could have been better served by researching the local Chinese community and naming the road after a specific individual or group. Another said it was for Australians of Chinese heritage to say whether they were offended or not. They didn't appreciate others' taking offence on their behalf, and making decisions without consultation. None said they found the word 'Chinaman' offensive as a place name; it was more a source of connection and pride.

Taking the opposite view, West Australian MP Pierre Yang had called in 2023 for all place names with 'Chinaman' to be changed. He called them racist, derogatory and contemptuous, and on a 'par with the N-word'.

There is surely a distinction between words that offend because they focus on racial characteristics or violent incidents in the past, and those that have become offensive by association. What is offensive about 'Chinaman'

– 'a man from China'? It can't even be condemned as sexist – very few Chinese women came out in the Gold Rush. David Blair, Editor of the journal *Placenames Australia*, responded 'more as a linguist than as a toponymist':

It intrigues me how words change their social value and become out-of-date so quickly and easily. I remember when I was in my 20s how 'Chinaman' was used by educated and sensitive people (like my Cambridge-educated mentor/professor, the brother of a bishop) in exactly the same way we'd use 'Chinese' now.

'Dutchman' had preceded it by being discarded (except in phrases like 'Well, I'll be a Dutchman!') some decades earlier. And nowadays we don't use 'Frenchman' either. Maybe the 'man' suffix was the killer blow! These days we're happy to use the adjective; and we do it as a real adjective, too, not as a noun substitute. I mean that we say, 'He's Chinese', not 'He's a Chinese'.

[Recently] the place name element 'Blackman' came up – as in Blackmans Lane, Blackmans Gully, etc. Tricky to deal with, I think, because many (most?) of these place names honour local settlers who had 'Blackman' as a surname ...

Isn't language wonderful? (and complicated!)

There are more than 250 place names across Australia containing the word 'Chinaman' or 'Chinamen', according to the government database *The Gazetteer of Australia*. We don't know of any 'Chinaman' place names currently in use in Yarra Ranges, but the hill beside Swansea Road Lilydale where the nursing home now stands was formerly called 'Chinaman's Hill'.⁷ Lee Sing and Lee Houy established market gardens on the Olinda Creek flats in 1891. Chinaman's Hill would have been on the land that Lee Sing leased from David Mitchell. Poon Kee, who had a grocery in Main Street Lilydale from 1909, cultivated a market garden from 1909 (until his death in 1943) on the Olinda Creek below his shop, cutting off a bend so that

⁶ <https://apple.news/Ar6Myja0zQIWLLYPbifogMQ>

⁷ 'The Woodlanders' (Charles Barrett), *The New Idea* 6/2/1906.

the island he created was naturally and easily watered.⁸



Poon Kee. Photo from his application for residency as an 'Alien resident in Australia', 16 October 1939. From L&DHS's newsletter Now and Then, Issue 3, 3rd September 2016.

There was a party of Chinese on the Emerald Diggings. They may have been responsible for the tunnel near Olinda Creek Road Kalorama (TP #105), but left no trace on the local place names. Apart from Woi wurrung names, a few Yarra Ranges place names reflect the Indigenous presence. The Black Spur, or more correctly 'the Blacks' Spur' was the route taken by the Wurundjeri on their trek to the Acheron Valley and their return to establish Coranderrk Station in the 1860s.

The words *lubra* and *picaninny* are considered offensive. *Lubra* comes from the word for 'woman' or 'wife' in the Nuenonne language of southern Tasmania. The historic property in

Yarra Glen formerly called 'Lubra Bend' is now 'Banksia Bend'. *Picaninny* is a pidgin word for a black child, possibly deriving from Portuguese *pequenino*. Picaninny Creek flows through the Coranderrk Bushland. The creek name remains unchanged, but 'Picaninny Lane' has become 'Barak Lane'.

We in the Mt Evelyn History Group have always sought permission from the Wurundjeri Elders for our publications, leading to and including the current *Aborigines in the Yarra Valley and Northern Dandenongs, revised edition*. Recently someone suggested we replace 'Aborigines' with 'Aboriginal People' in the title, and that is a revision to consider if we reprint.

The Amnesty International website discusses exactly this usage. "'Aborigine' is generally perceived as insensitive because it has racist connotations from Australia's colonial past, and lumps people with diverse backgrounds into a single group. Without a capital 'a', ['aborigine' or] 'aboriginal' can refer to an Indigenous person from anywhere in the world. The word means 'original inhabitant' in Latin."⁹

Most of the Yarra Ranges LGA, including the Yarra Valley and Northern Dandenongs, lies in the domain of the Woi wurrung-speaking people, but a small area of Belgrave South and Lysterfield falls in Boon wurrung country. The two language groups share 93% common vocabulary. Both the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung are part of the Kulin Nation.¹⁰

Karen Phillips and Paula Herlihy

Correction

In *Things Past* #136, in the body of the article on page 12, we gave '1922' as the year of David Edwards' death. It should of course have been '2022', as in the heading.

Apologies for the error.

⁸ Lilydale & District Historical society, *The Longest Journey*, p.16; *Gun Alley*, 2013. Also Ray Oliver (16/8/1934 - 5/7/2024) conversation with Paula Herlihy 2023.

⁹ 'Why saying 'Aborigine' isn't OK', Amnesty International, accessed 13/2/2025.

¹⁰ *Aborigines in the Yarra Valley and Northern Dandenongs, revised edition*, 2016, p.5.

The Ugly 'Duxling' of Mount Evelyn

Ted Mundie didn't know it, but being dumped by Mother at the Mount Evelyn School office was a turning point in his life. 'Nearly thirteen years old,' said Mr Krieger, the Principal. 'And no schooling since third grade?' Ted, who was used to wearing grotty dungarees and rubbing kerosene on his body to keep mosquitoes away, nodded. He'd been removed from his last school when Mother had taken up a job at a bush camp, processing rabbits for skin and meat. Life had gone from 'where's ya father, Chinky Chinky Chinaman?' to barks of 'earn your keep, twist as many rabbit necks as you can, and don't slow us down.' Ted's friends had been grown men, horses, dogs, ferrets, and the occasional Tiger Snake (these were only *acquaintances*, not friends). Children had been as rare as Bunyips out in that scrubby bush – and now, fingernails scraped clean of rabbit blood, and shoved into a clean shirt, Ted faced a whole school full of them. Mr Krieger sensed his unease and said, 'Let's put you into seventh grade, and we'll see how you do. If you get top marks on the mid year exam, I'll move you into eighth grade with people your own age. That's *if*, mind.'



Young Ted

Luckily for Ted, he was small, and easily hid amongst the eleven-year-olds. He couldn't however escape his appearance, which bore the strong stamp of a Chinese heritage. 'A good-looking man, your Father,' Mother said. But Australia in the

depression era was not a multicultural place, despite the many Chinese who had emigrated and prospered during the Gold Rush. Frustrated, Ted refused to look at his 'ugly' reflection.

Despite his classmates being quite pleasant, Ted still hid in the library at break time – and soon discovered that it was an Aladdin's cave of treasures. It had a large and well curated collection, picked out by Mr Krieger himself, and was outstanding for a 41 pupil school. Ted loved reading, and eagerly devoured Shakespeare, Dickens and Thackeray, but found a soulmate in Ion Idriess, of *Flynn of the Inland* fame. These stories of bush heroism resonated with Ted, and he wished bitterly that he could read another Idriess offering – *Lasseter's Last Ride*. Ted's pocket money from selling Gladioli (threepence a bunch) and splitting logs (three shillings per day) would never allow him to buy even a battered second-hand copy. Besides, his money helped Mother, a laundress, pay the bills. Mother suffered from a low IQ and often argued with her employers. She had been recently dismissed for snatching a mop off one employer and pushing her, plump tweed-clad rump first, into the bucket of grimy water, muttering: 'flash and fancies. Big "I Ams"!'. So extra money was always needed.

After a slow start, Ted finally tamed algebra and arithmetic, which had squabbled like angry possums inside his head. His classmates respected his quiet, studious nature, and when he got top marks and was moved into eighth grade, he was dubbed 'The Professor.' Ted even had friends now, and each lunchtime they played a superior game of Red Injuns. One time they ventured whooping into the forest, following moose tracks until they found the sheep that had made them, and getting lost on the way back. They were lucky that Mr Krieger didn't take to them with a tomahawk and send their scalps home to their families; but they did get a sizeable detention; more study time for Ted.

After the big exam, self doubt plagued Ted. He'd worked hard, yes – but had it been enough? 'TED!' Screamed a fellow Brave, grabbing his arm as he hung about in the playground. 'You won Dux, look!' He took Ted inside and pointed at the results pinned on the noticeboard. Ted got

handshakes, slaps on the back and other delicious praise that he had never tasted before. Previously, his only future job prospect was that of a chick sexer ('All Ayshuns are good at that!'



Ted with first wife Pat

some tactless mug had once said), but now he saw much more ahead of him. A career in writing might be possible. On prize day, with Mother

blinking in the audience, Ted

went on stage and shook Mr Kreiger's hand. And the prize? A luscious, shiny brand-new book: *Lasseter's Last Ride*.



Older Ted

My maternal grandfather Edward 'Ted' Mundie (1926-2005) was the son of itinerant servant Florrie Mundie and a Chinese jockey, Jimmy Lee. Florrie left Lee when Ted was a baby and he had no memory of his Father. Once he'd left Mount Evelyn School, Ted went on to have many adventures as a farmer, radio copywriter and tea-tree cutter in the Dandenong Ranges. In his 40s, Ted began writing professionally – his published works included the titles *Going Bush*, *Go Country*, *You and Me*, *Gum Tree* and *The Home Renovator's Handbook*. Ted's best-known work, *Cockatoo Ash Wednesday*, the

***People's Story* was published after the disastrous bushfires of 1983 and is now in both the State Library of Victoria and the National Library of Australia. Until his death at the age of 79, Ted often spoke about how he went from a social outcast to becoming the Dux of Mount Evelyn School in 1941.**

Karen Redlich

Mount Evelyn Primary School 1910-1985. Edwards, J. Welsh, A. Barczak, H. Tytler, H. Porter, T. (1985). Bandid Productions, St Kilda.

A Rich Childhood. Mundie, E, Date unknown.

Fragments of two unfinished draft manuscripts for Ted's biography.

With special thanks to the Mount Evelyn History Group.

Letter to the Editor: Mt Evelyn Station

Franc Smith writes, 'I am most definitely interested [in] YRC Ritchie Donald's proposed work on protecting the remaining original platform behind the Library/Reading Room] ...

... I have many great memories of travelling through Mount Evelyn and getting off there since circa 1952 ... The platform was like a garden and each time we went through there my Mum and her best friend Mable Richmond (her hubby Ray was the head sawyer at the Powelltown Mill) knew [J.A.] Paterson – the Station Master, [and] they would get cuttings off the Pelargoniums and Geraniums etc. Every house in those days had these planted around the sides supposedly to stop snakes from going under them.

Back in the day going to Melbourne from Powelltown by train often turned into a three day trip – hard to believe but it's staggering to think it was over 70 years ago.

Got to write this out for the Grandkids as they can't believe I'd just turned 12 before I lived in a house with power and I was 20 before I lived in a house with a Telephone – and even that was a "Party Line". They take so much for granted.'

2024 Xmas Breakup – Thanks Mary and Glenn

Just a quick trip down a very good memory lane from last year, once again we had a lovely last

meeting and breakup at the home of Mary and Glenn Golds. And once again Mary and Glenn prepared for a Garden Party and reluctantly moved us into their undercover area fringed with ferns and hanging baskets. A good time was had by all, as the photo bears witness to!



L to R: Rosemary Baker, Marion Stott, Jean Edwards, Lloyd Stott, Karen Phillips, Paula Herlihy, Tim Herlihy, Glenn Golds, Louise Fitinghoff, Kevin Phillips, Robyn Collard. Robyn Taylor and Desma also attended, and Mary is the photographer!

From Kev's Rain Gauge

Rainfall (in mm) for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, and Melbourne for the last 3 months.

	Feb-25	Mar-25	Apr-25	YTD
Mt Evelyn	18.1	53.0	19.5	134.3
McKillop	22.3	60.0	19.2	144.2
Melbourne	45.2	40.4	13.0	161.2

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

Kevin Phillips

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