



Newsletter 14, March 2009

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc.

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Dates for your diary

'Origins of Palmistry', Saturday 28th March, at 1 pm in the Community Room. Steve Tucker will speak about the ways Palmistry has been viewed in the past. There will be palm readings, followed by afternoon tea. Gold coin donation. See flyer on p.3.

Anzac Day march, Sunday 19th April, 2 pm, march of veterans down Wray Crescent.

This year the Mt Evelyn RSL will also be holding their first ever **Anzac Day Dawn Service**, Saturday 25th April, 5.45 am for a 6 am start, RSL War Memorial, Hardy House, Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn. All welcome.

History Group meeting Tuesday 28th April, 7.30 pm at Morrison House Room D.

'We did but see her passing by' – the Queen's 1954 visit 'through' the Shire of Lillydale, talk by Anthony McAleer, Saturday 23rd May, 1 pm in the Community Room.

Soldiers at Brother Bill's

With the renewed interest in exploring for tunnels at Mt Evelyn Reserve, Anthony McAleer and Janice Newton have kindly provided some notes of their interviews regarding the soldiers stationed at the camp during WWII.

From Anthony's research:

'There were Americans camped at Brother Bill's Camp at Mt Evelyn and we had quite a bit to do with them. During the war they often congregated up the Main Street of Mt Evelyn of a night, they would get into the milkbar and buy up drinks. There wasn't only Americans though, there were Australian troops too.

Of a morning one of the first things they'd do, and it used to be our alarm clock, is march along York Road from the Recreation Reserve to the Do Drop Inn and march back again. That was always our signal to get up and get ready for school.

They used to have manoeuvres in the bush around Quinn's Reserve, training and such. They'd do jungle training with one crowd in the bush and another crowd chasing them and they'd all have black faces.

I would have thought they were there from 1942 through to about 1944 but they could have been there for the duration. Brother Bill's camp had been set up well before the war as a Church of England recreation camp.

They'd go into the bush with Bren gun carriers and jeeps and a few things like that. As far as I knew it was a medical training school as they would do these manoeuvres where blokes would be casualties and others would bandage them up and cart them back on jeeps to the camp. All these things were happening but we didn't know too much about what went on there. Going by how many were marching along the road of a morning there were usually up to 30, they even had their own drummer to march with.'

Reg Polkinghorne, Mt Evelyn

'There were a lot of Americans at Mt Evelyn, approximately 1000 troops, at Brother Bill's Camp at the Mt Evelyn Reserve. It was mainly mechanics and cooks or young officers. They used to get off the train and they had to fall in and they were all marched down to where they belonged but they very rarely came into town. My younger brother and I would watch them go through the scrub with their Bren guns and what have you.

Mind you, the camp was off limits to the people in the town, you weren't allowed to go down to the Recreation Reserve. As there were no pubs at Mt Evelyn, they'd do their drinking at Lilydale, mainly Claude Hollis' Crown Hotel.'

Dorothy Briggs (nee Lockington), Mt Evelyn

From Janice Newton:

'During the war the Rec. was used as an R & R centre and had quite a number of American marines. They used to visit the Do Drop In (corner of York and Swansea Roads). They expected to buy lots of things – they were not aware that there was rationing. We could only sell one at a time. There was (another?) little Dad's Army, a group of men. (Thank God we didn't have need for them!)

Joyce Evans, summary 3/5/1993 Mt Evelyn Secondary School Oral History Project (Tapes Lillydale Historical Museum)

'During the war the army had a medical school at Brother Bill's – they commandeered Brother Bill's National Fitness Camp and they had a medical unit there and Americans came and stayed there during the war – not a lot, I suppose there might have been 50 Americans there at a time. There may have been a base unit there that did the medical – I don't know what they did, they must have got a certificate of some sort there. They used to do simulations of accidents. I suppose that was part of their medical training. They had Bren gun carriers and they'd get them right up in the bush in them. They'd have somebody supposedly trapped underneath and get up there to extract them out and all that sort of thing – put bandages on them from head to toe.

They not only did their medical part of it but they did military training around the hills at home. They marched and they did their bush training in the hills around. One funny episode was that at one stage they'd been going through the bush at home ... there was a red team versus the blue team. Anyway, they'd been around the skirts of our place a few times during the morning and at some stage in the morning mum had to go to the toilet which was outside, so she was in a hurry to get in there and she pulls the door open and goes to go in there and there's a soldier sitting on the dunny. So he got a fright and mum got a bigger fright!

Mainly the Australian ones that did their training – the American ones, you didn't see a lot of except they would get up the Mt Evelyn street of a night ... just like soldiers, they didn't have their Coca-Cola or anything like that in Mt Evelyn in those days. They had their lemonade and icecreams – they, the shopkeepers used to do good business up there with the shops.

At one stage there mum used to make lemon syrup and during the summer she'd usually make a big jug of it and we had an outside cooler, which was just a hole dug in the bank. Anyway one particular stage, mum had got out this lemon syrup when a few of the soldiers were around, they had a drink of it and, lo and behold, the next time they came there was about 30 of them came – they all conned mum into making them more.'

Reg Polkinghorne

Memories of Marysville

Among so many other tragic losses, Marysville Historical Society lost their archival collection in the bushfires. The Royal Historical Society is coordinating the collection of Marysville memorabilia. If you have any items for copying (e.g. photos or postcards of Marysville), Paula can do this and forward the copies to the RHS. If you wish to donate items that can't be copied, such as artefacts, Paula will forward a description (preferably with photo) to be followed up in the future.

Lilydale in the 1880s

Thanks to Ian James for providing the map of Lilydale in the late 1880s (p.4). Ian found it at the Shire offices – provenance unknown, so he decided it was fair game to copy.

Opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the writers, not necessarily those of Mt Evelyn History Group Inc.

Origins of Palmistry

Steve Tucker

will speak about the way palmistry has been written about in the past - as novelty, science, 'dark art' or mystical truth.

Steve's talk is practical and recreational rather than spiritual. He is happy to give brief readings of palms in the audience if you have the time.

All welcome

Saturday 28th March 2009, 1 pm, Library Community Room, Wray Crescent, Mt Evelyn.

Light afternoon tea provided.

Gold coin donation to

Mt Evelyn History Group (to cover venue hire).



