



Things Past

Newsletter 15, April 2009

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

A0051327F

P.O. Box 101 Mt Evelyn Vic 3796

www.mt-evelyn.net

Enquiries, membership & book sales: Paula Herlihy (President):
herlihy@alphalink.com.au or telephone 9736 2935 and leave message

Newsletter & minutes: Karen Phillips (Secretary), karen.m.l.phillips@gmail.com

Dates for your diary

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

'Meet the Author'. Ross McMullin, author of *Will Dyson, Australia's Radical Genius* will speak about Australian WWI war artist Will Dyson, Monday 20th April, 2pm Monbulk RSL. Refreshments provided. Contact Steve Beard on 0429 052 848 or 9761 9379.

Collecting Military Memorabilia, talk by Librarian Alan Bennett, Thursday 23rd April, 11am Lilydale Library. No charge but please book on 9294 3120. Bring any military items you would like identified.

ERL Military History Group meeting Friday 24th April, 2pm Croydon Library. The speaker will be an ex-RAF tail-gunner who flew 48 missions over Germany.

Anzac Day Dawn Service, Saturday 25th April, 5.45am for a 6am start, RSL War Memorial, Hardy House, Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn. All welcome.

History Group meeting Tuesday 28th April, 7.30pm 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, 1pm in the Community Room.

Family connections: Bradman Avenue and Billygoat Hill

Maree Hahn is researching her family history and would like to know the owners and subdivision date of a property in the Bradman Avenue/ McGregor Court area. Bradman Avenue may have been the driveway to the original house.

Both my grandparents' families had a long association with the early days of the area in that they had holiday shacks on Billy Goat Hill (burnt out on Black Friday). Various other relatives at one time owned property in Bradman Avenue, my parents included.

My uncle built a home in McGregor Court circa 1948. My immediate relatives who built in Mt Evelyn were: my grandparents, Albert and 'Kitty' Wallis (see photo, right); Kitty's brother, Cyril Arthur 'Billy' Barr; my parents, Cyril and Marie Wallis; my aunt & uncle, Greg and Betty O'Callaghan.

In the late 1920s or early 1930s the Wallis, Barr and Wiltshire families had places at Billy Goat Hill (known as Rocky Ridge, according to my aunt). They lived in Bourke and Russell Streets. The Wallis property was on the hill behind the Wiltshires, in fact the kids at one time levelled the land between the two properties and made a tennis court. Penny concerts were held there to raise money for the construction of the new hospital in Lilydale (known as the 'blood and bandages' to my generation because of the red and white paint work). Mock weddings were held where everyone 'cross dressed' and lots of fun activities were organised for all.



Albert and Kitty Wallis

Other families (Trevallion, Wiltshire) were friends and lived in the Clifton Hill, West Preston and Thornbury areas. All were members of the Clifton Hill Car Club in the 1920s. The car club travelled up there for picnics and, when land became available, several families built holiday houses. Some were mere shacks and others were basic houses that were added onto as time went by. My grandparents' house was weatherboard and had a veranda all around. Some were cement sheet.

Harold Schultz, wife, son Ray and daughter Beryl lived in Clifton Hill and holidayed up there and always had a huge fire on bonfire night in front of their home. Harold was a city jeweller and would make small animal brooches as gifts for the kids, especially at Christmas. The annual yabby contest was held (I think) on Christmas Day at the pond near the station. The pond was the water supply for the steam trains.

I was born in 1945 and my grandparents, still living in West Preston, built their home at 6 Bradman Avenue on the 'new estate' when I was a child of perhaps 5 or 6. This was to be their permanent home later on. I can still remember the gates to the original estate and the beautiful pines that lined the driveway (in photo, right). I recall a very old house being next to my grandparents', set back off the road, and I always thought it was the original one on the estate (photo, below left). Very fond memories of the area, they were the 'good old days' when my cousins and I would tear through the bush to the railway track to watch the train steam through the cutting. We loved to walk down to the 'Red Robin' shop on Hereford Road and get an icecream.

My grandfather, Albert, was a surgical bootmaker who worked for J MOLONY in King Street, Melbourne. He made custom made running spikes for some of our elite runners. Once he moved to Mt Evelyn to live, he commuted daily into the city by train for about 8 years before retiring. Those runners would travel out to Mt Evelyn, where he would make their shoes in his garage. They would have none other than 'Mr Wallis' make their spikes. I still have a pair of kid leather shoes he made for my father when he was a child. The workmanship is amazing.

I was always sure that my grandparents lived at 6 Bradman Avenue, in fact that was the address on my grandmother's death certificate in 1969. Perhaps the street has been renumbered at some point, as the house is now number 7. After my grandmother died, my grandfather stayed on for another couple of years before selling and moving to Richmond to live with his eldest son, Richard. Thus ended my link with Mt Evelyn.

Names remembered by Jean Jaeger from early years in the area are: Ada O'Connor. Billy Evans who lived behind Fernhill Road. Mr Wray (?) was the minister who ran the Post Office and newspaper agency in the main street. Hollyoaks (?) had a strawberry farm. Greens were the greengrocers. Carroll (?) was the milkman and would give the kids a lift home on his horse and cart. Bowring was the baker. Claude Newton lived next door to Schultz's. Dr Hardy treated my grandparents for many years and was the signatory on my grandmother's death certificate.

Sources: Jean Jaeger (nee Wiltshire), Greg O'Callaghan, Netta Barr.

From Maree Hahn

'Origins of Palmistry' talk

Steve Tucker's talk 'Origins of Palmistry' attracted a large and enthusiastic audience to the Community Room on 28th March.

Steve gave a surprising etymology for the word: *Palmistry* was originally *Pawmestry* – the study of the paws. He explained that hands have been seen as markers of identity



Shack in Bradman Avenue c. 1950.



Maree's father putting up a fence, old (original?) house in background

through the ages and in many parts of the world. He suggested parallels as diverse as Stone Age hand prints on cave walls to modern forensic identification by fingerprints.

Tradition traces the beginnings of Palmistry to Ancient Egypt. Hand prints in clay, some with the lines marked, have been found from the time of the Old Kingdom (from 2650 BCE) but no written texts survive from that time. The earliest texts on character reading from the hands come from India and China from about 1,000 BCE. Some of the great military commanders (Alexander the Great, Hannibal and later Napoleon) wouldn't make a decision without the say-so of their palmists and astrologers.

The first book setting out the principles of palmistry dated from 1417 and was one of the earliest books to be printed in Europe. It was around this period that the Gypsies arrived in Europe. Gypsies specialised in fortune telling, including Palmistry, and it may have been racial hostility towards them that led to the practice being banned. Palm reading remained illegal in both England and Australia till the 1950s. The tradition has enjoyed a recent resurgence along with New Age philosophies.

Steve concluded by giving some insightful hand readings to members of the audience.

Military History Group

Did you know that Eastern Regional Libraries have a Military History Group? They meet every two months on Friday afternoons, 2pm at Croydon Library. They also put out an interesting newsletter, *On Parade*, available from local libraries. To subscribe online, send a blank email message to: militarynews-subscribe@erl.vic.gov.au For more information contact Alan Bennett on: alan.bennett@erl.vic.gov.au

St John Ambulance History

Jim Humphrey is writing the history of St John Ambulance First Aid. He would like to hear from any member or relative who was connected with the unit prior to 1973, particularly to the Search and Rescue Unit based in Mt Evelyn. Jim would also appreciate any photos from the period 1962-1973. If you can help, please contact him at 42 The Crescent, Mt Evelyn 3796. Jim is an ex Corps Staff Officer.

TUNNEL FOUND! – but not at the Reserve

A tunnel located by researcher Mark Rawson on private land near McKillop Road has been acknowledged. Mark alerted the Shire of Yarra Ranges because he considered the partly collapsed tunnel dangerous to children. The *Ranges Trader Mail*, which reported on the story (7/4/09), claims credit for following up with the Shire.

Cr Tim Heenan agrees that the tunnel should be blocked off for safety reasons but discounts Mark's claim of a military origin for it. Whether it's a relic of WWII, 19th century mining (Tim's preferred explanation) or a diversion from the nearby Aqueduct, at the very least it proves Mark right about the existence of unmapped tunnels under Mt Evelyn. It would be nice to see credit given where it's due.

The tunnel is reported to be untimbered and unsupported (unlikely in a mining tunnel). Let's hope that rendering the site safe won't destroy it and that a heritage assessment can determine its history. The matter has been referred to the State Government.

The Army Camp – many questions, a few answers, maybe

Attempting to find more information on the units and personnel who trained at the Mt Evelyn Reserve Camp during the Second World War, I consulted the WW2 US Medical Research Centre, <http://med-dept.com/index.php> Here is the reply:

'Thanks for your message. As you probably know, the US Medical Department followed the USAOS Australia subdivision into 7 Base Sections.

Base Section # 4 was Victoria with Melbourne as its Headquarters. I can only confirm that the 200-bed 4th General Hospital was stationed in Melbourne (having received the blessing of the Australian Government to take over and occupy the Royal*

* 2,000-bed (Ed.)

Melbourne Hospital). The agreement included ample time to train both US and Australian medical staff, some of which were then deployed over the different Base Sections.

I was however unable to find any specific data about the type and number of units which were trained at Mt Evelyn, and there seems to be no trace of such Medical Training School located there either. Even the US Army 'Green' Books relating to the US Medical Department in WW2 in the war against Japan, don't mention this facility.

If the facility was not a US Army medical camp, other possibilities are: 1) there was not really a 'medical school' in Mt Evelyn. Local witnesses to 'rescues' and bandaging may have observed a first aid component of general training and mistakenly concluded that the training was medical; or 2) the camp was Australian, not American. The National War Memorial was unable to help on this but sent these tips for military research:

'Unfortunately, military camps can be difficult to track if all you know is the location; often records will be held under the name of the camp or a nearby location. The Memorial's focus is on war, rather than on the home front, so we often do not have much information about training camps in Australia. That said, there should be records of the acquisition of the land by the government. These will be held by the National Archives and should give you a starting point.'

You can search the Archives' catalogue here:

<http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/recordsearch.aspx>. Search for keywords like 'Mt Evelyn' and other nearby locations and 'camp' or 'base'. You can narrow the date range to 1939-1945 to limit the results you get. If you have any trouble, you can contact the Archives on 1300 886 881 or ref@naa.gov.au. If you can find out the name of the camp, that will make the search easier. If you know what unit/s were serving in the area, that would make things easier; you could then trace the records of those units through the Memorial: http://www.awm.gov.au/research/infosheets/unit_history.asp.

There is also a good website which outlines the locations of various military camps around Australia during the Second World War:

<http://www.ozatwar.com/ozatwar/militarycamps.htm>.

There may also have been books written about camps in the area, as there have been for parts of Queensland. You can search the Memorial's book collection here:

<http://www.awm.gov.au/firstopac>. You could also try researching medical training, or the places Americans were posted in Australia. The medical volumes of the Official History of Australia in the War of 1939-1945 may have some information. These are available online here: <http://www.awm.gov.au/histories/volume.asp?conflict=2>. There have been a variety of books written about the US forces in Australia. If you find a book in the Memorial's collection that you would like to use, your local library may have a copy, or if they do not, one should be available via inter-library loan arranged through your local library.'

I couldn't trace any reference to the Mt Evelyn camp through the National Archives site. While the failure may be down to 'user trouble' on my part, it counts against the idea that the camp was an Australian Army facility.

The best guess is still that the Mt Evelyn camp was associated with the US 4th General Hospital, which took over the newly completed Royal Melbourne Hospital from 1942 to 1944. Anthony McAleer states that this was the only American unit based in Melbourne for the whole of that period – most were sent north by 1943. The dates coincide with the time when the camp was said to be in operation.

The 4th General Hospital pioneered the use of 'portable hospitals' that were later used in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere. It's possible that personnel were trained in Mt Evelyn for operating this type of unit. Histories of the 4th General Hospital don't mention off-site training camps but some practical training must have taken place.

So that's where we're at with the research – not far from where we started.

Karen Phillips