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Things Past

Newsletter 28, June 2010

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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

History Group meeting: 'Display & File Night', Tuesday 22nd June 7.30pm, Old Community Link.

'History of the Shrine – a building with a soul', exhibition at Ringwood Library till 30th June, then at Belgrave Library from 5th July for five weeks.

'Stories of your treasures'. Saturday 24th July 1pm, Station House. Louise Blake will speak on recording the stories behind your family or personal treasures.

History Group meeting, Tuesday 24th August, 7.30pm, Old Community Link.

'Open Day @ Link' September, date and details to be confirmed.

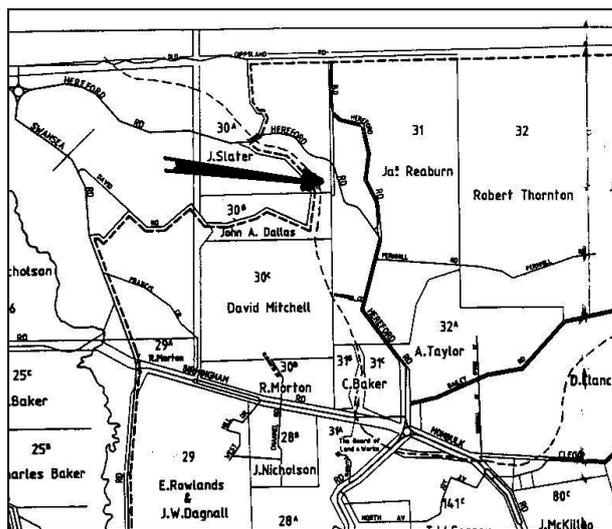
Government Road or Beryl's Way?

The Mt Evelyn Mail (18/5/2010) reported that the Mt Evelyn Environment Protection & Progress Association (MEEPPA) had suggested an upgrade to Government Road to provide access to the Owl Land Reserve. MEEPPA also proposed renaming the road 'Beryl's Way' after the late D. Beryl Phillips. A long-serving president of the group, Beryl was instrumental in saving the reserve from sale as residential property.

Government Road runs between Hereford Road and the northern edge of the Owl Land. Using it to give volunteers safer access to the reserve seems a good idea. Street names, however, are better left unchanged. Apart from the practical reasons (name changes inconvenience residents and emergency services), every street name is a fragment of history.

Any public road that had been surveyed but not named was likely to appear on survey maps as 'Government Road'. Though a non-specific name, it preserves

an interesting history. The road was part of an old alignment from the 1870s.



Composite map showing original selections from Parish Plans with modern main roads. The arrow indicates Government Road as originally surveyed. From *First Selectors of Mt Evelyn*.

In 1874 James Raeburn, a dairyman from Collingwood, applied for a selection of 307 acres that would have included Morrison Reserve and most of the Owl Land. The Parish Plan with the original selections

shows a narrow lane, unnamed at that stage, leading from Old Gippsland Road along the border between Raeburn's selection and James Slater's (selection applied for in 1870). The alignment corresponds to the northern part of Old Hereford Road, part of Kookaburra Lane and Government Road. By 1880 Raeburn had not met the fencing requirements of his lease because the road (now Old Hereford Road) was to run through his property and its route was not finalised.¹

The current *Melway* shows that Government Road lines up with the straight section of Old Hereford Road (118 B6-B8). Everton Road and Harvey Street extend down to the same line (118 B8-B10), though Government Road does not seem ever to have joined up with them. This line coincided with the western boundary of James Raeburn's selection, dividing it from the selections of John Dallas and David Mitchell. Up to 1977, *Melway* shows Old Hereford continuous with Kookaburra Lane, that is, the northern part of the original road shown on the Parish Plan. The southern part, now Government Road, did not appear in *Melway* till around 2005. This section may have fallen into disuse after Hereford Road was constructed in the 1920s.

In the early sixties, Kookaburra Lane was an unnamed cutting off Hereford Road where the local teenagers used to meet. 'The spot was always good for a laugh, consequently the place got to be known as Kookaburra Corner. Some local identities may very well have been conceived there.'²

The 'lost' section of road between Old Hereford and Kookaburra is no longer visible on the ground but probably still exists as an easement. The power lines follow the old alignment down the hillside through private property. Government Road, then, is part of a hidden history that pre-dates both Hereford Road and the present route of Old Hereford Road.

¹ Lands Department files, in Janice Newton, *The First Selectors of Mt Evelyn*, 1996.

² Karl Hell, letter, in Paula Herlihy, *Street Names of Mt Evelyn*, 1996.

While it would be appropriate to honour Beryl Phillips' contribution, 'Beryl's Way' would be better as a name for the track through the Owl Land than as a replacement road name. No doubt permission to use the name will have been sought from Beryl's executor.

Beryl was a founding member of the History Group as well as a passionate environmentalist. Beryl and Kevin Phillips were distantly related.

Karen Phillips

Trail bridge restored

Did you know that the old Nelson Road bridge over the Lilydale to Warburton railway line (Melway 38 G2) is now accessible to Trail users? For years it was shut away behind cyclone mesh in the grounds of Mt Lilydale College and was filled in underneath for safety.



The restored Nelson Road Bridge, Lilydale, with reconstructed railway gate.

The mesh fence has now been moved back and the infill removed, to reveal a highly unusual construction. The 'decking' (if that's the right word) consists of lengths of old railway track, bent into a slight arch. The date 1928 is visible on one. Most of the cross-beams are also made from pieces of track, while the pylons and railings are timber. The pylon surfaces have rotted slightly where they came in contact with the earth fill but the steel parts would be just about indestructible.

Lengths of old track were used extensively for railway infrastructure, e.g. the edges of station platforms, but we don't know another example of a bridge built from

them. Perhaps railway buffs could let us know of any others?

For more on railways in the local area, see *Railways of the Yarra Valley* by Nick Anchen, published earlier this year. The book, which contains some superb photos, is divided into three parts: the Healesville Line, Warburton Line and timber tramways of the Upper Yarra Valley. It is available from the Mt Evelyn Post Office.



Greg on the bridge. The wooden pylons, bent rail track decking and cross-pieces can be seen. Photos Kevin Phillips.

Bush scene with billy goats

Mt Evelyn shoppers will have noticed the recently opened Billy Goat Hill Brasserie on the corner of Wray Crescent and Station Street. The frosted windows feature a delightful scene of billy goats in the bush. Business owners Reuben and Nicole Nieuwesteeg have family history connections to the local area and to Billygoat Hill in particular.

Moving into the Link

Viola! We have the cupboard! Thanks to Paula and Tim for collecting and assembling the lockable steel cupboard to store History Group stuff in the Old Community Link. A locksmith will be consulted on fitting locks to the four-drawer filing cabinet. At our next meeting on 22nd June, we plan to start arranging our files and putting up a display in the old Link building.

The Public Transport Group is no longer using the Link. Community Development people will be taking it over from them.

Family history publications

A new issue of Ralph Reid's series of family history bibliographies is now available. Formerly published as a single volume for all of Australia, the listing is now printed in separate volumes by state. Entries are listed under the state where the first Australian generation was located.

Each entry contains details of a published print or CD-ROM format history that relates to the associated family name. Listings include title, author, publisher, place and date of publication, number of pages, ISBN and types of content. The volume *Victorian Family Histories* contains 2,795 family name entries, price \$22.00 including postage.

For further information, contact: R. Reid, PO Box 304, Kiama, NSW 2533, phone 0412 071 086 or email intohistory@optusnet.com.au

Leggetts: produce store to ballroom

One of the finds among the Mt Evelyn Primary School archives was a booklet, *The Leggett Family and their Famous Ballroom in Prahran* (1988). The Leggetts of ballroom fame were the same family that owned the Mt Evelyn Garden & Produce Store (demolished in 2008) next door to the primary school.

The booklet was produced by the Prahran Historical Society as part of their local history series. An updated version, *Select Your Partners* by Phil Leggett, is still available from the Society. Paula has purchased a copy.

Annette Leggett, a former pupil, bequeathed \$15,000 to the school in memory of her husband. The MEPS newsletter of 23rd June 2005 stated that the bequest would be used for 'establishing the Desmond and Annette Leggett Library Trust Fund'.

MEPS documents

Willie Koole, who has been tracing class photos missing from the Mt Evelyn Primary School collection (listed in *Things Past*, issue 21), also located a folder of old letters written to the education department, as well as some of the work of past students. Paula will scan the

documents, which will be used for display purposes. Our October display at the Exhibition Space will feature MEPS history, to coincide with the school's centenary. The centenary celebrations will be on Saturday 16th October, 11am - 4pm. Official opening will be at 2pm but lots of activities prior to that.

Yarra Glen tour map

A self-guided walking map highlighting historic places in Yarra Glen is now available. Walks of different lengths are suggested depending on the time available. Produced by the Shire's Economic Development unit, the map also promotes local businesses, which are still recovering from the disastrous bushfires of 2009. The Yarra Glen Historical society and the Yarra Glen Business and Tourism Association assisted with information. The map is available from Yarra Glen businesses, or call 1300 368 333.

From *Shirewide*, issue 55.

Fromelles talk

July 19th will be the anniversary of the 1916 battle of Fromelles in northern France. The remains of 250 Australian and British servicemen recovered from mass graves at Pheasant Wood have now been reburied in individual graves. Many have been identified through their DNA.

The Eastern Regional Libraries Military History Club has arranged a talk by Major General Mike O'Brien about the Fromelles recovery, Friday 27th August, 2pm at Croydon RSL. Places are limited to the first 100, so book early. Call Alan Bennett on 9294 5640 or ring any ERL branch.

175 years Victorian history grants

2010 is the 175th anniversary of the founding of Melbourne as a city.

The Victoria 175 History Grants provide small grants of up to \$12,000 to community organisations to preserve, record, publish and commemorate the origins and founding stories of Victoria's many and diverse communities, including Indigenous communities, and the stories behind individuals or organisations that have contributed to Victoria.

Applications for the grants program are being accepted between 10 May and 16 July 2010

Details and application form at:

http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/CommunityCollactions/Victoria175_HistoryGrants.asp

From *mc2 forum*

Outer Eastern Historical Societies

The History Group may consider joining the Association of Outer Eastern Historical Societies. They have information about many activities in our area and produce an interesting newsletter. Their website is: <http://www.aoehs.org/>

'Melba' elm at West Hill

Readers may remember a query from Ross Martin about the elm on the West Hill estate, believed to have been planted by Dame Nellie Melba (*Things Past* issue 25). Sue Thompson has investigated the story but with inconclusive results. Here is her reply.

I have not been able to establish any link between Dame Nellie Melba and the property, though I know one of the owners knew David Mitchell, Melba's father.

From 1887 until 1908 the property, then 252 acres, was owned by one John Blyth and from 1908 [until 1911] by his widow, Ellen. John Blyth was a Scotsman who came to Victoria during the gold rushes. He was an importer and merchant and chairman of many statutory authorities. He was a Commissioner of the Great Exhibition staged in 1888, which included the building of the Exhibition Buildings in Melbourne.

As David Mitchell was the builder of the Exhibition Buildings, the two men would have known each other. In fact, David Mitchell was a pall bearer at Blyth's funeral in December 1908. (Lilydale Express obituary January 9, 1909).

From Sue Thompson, LDHS

From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for May 2010 for Mt Evelyn, Melbourne and the Melbourne average:

Mt Evelyn	Melb	Melb Av
64.3mm	23.0mm	55.7mm

Kevin Phillips