

# Things Past

Newsletter 32

October 2010

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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## Dates for your diary

History of Mt Evelyn Primary School, October display at Mt Evelyn Exhibition Space.

YRHN Antiques & Collectables Appraisals Day, Sunday 24th October, 11am to 4pm  
Montrose Community Centre, Mt Dandenong Tourist Road, Montrose, Melway 52 D7.

**NB: no History Group meeting for October, due to the flurry of activities this month!**

'The Lilydale to Warburton Railway' talk by Michael Foley, Saturday 27th November, 1pm-4pm Mt Evelyn Station House. See pp.3-4. This will be our final activity for the year.

**December: no meeting.**

## Past, present & future at MEPS

Rain and cold did not deter a large turnout of students, parents and teachers, past and present, from attending the Mt Evelyn Primary School Centenary on 16th October.

It was a day to celebrate the new school while paying tribute to its past. There were displays of historical photos and artefacts, an old-style classroom and traditional games. Teachers were resplendent in beautiful Edwardian costumes. The 1985 Time Capsule was opened and the updated school history launched. Paula Herlihy and Tony Porter have done a wonderful job on the book.

70% of the school buildings have been replaced. The brick buildings from the previous upgrade (administration block, front classroom and gymnasium) were retained but completely refitted, e.g. the former library is now the Early Learning Centre. The emphasis was on flexibility, as the buildings have to serve not only their present functions but the unpredictable needs of the future.

The oldest relic on site would now be the cypress at the front fence, exact age unknown. A row of cypresses was planted in Miss Foster's time, 1918-1925, but any that died were replaced.

As Principal Phil Comport commented in his opening speech, the Centenary was a wonderful day with wonderful planning, even



**MEPS Principal Phil Comport opens the 1985 Time Capsule.**

to the extent of a burst of sunshine to allow the official opening to proceed outside.

Phil thanked many of those he could see on stage and in the audience by name and mentioned how they had contributed, e.g. Heather McTaggart for obtaining State Government funds. He praised the architects ClarkHopkinsClark and the site supervisor, with whom he had been working closely over the last few years.

Phil recapped the history of the project, pointing out that it wasn't enough just to say 'the school has dreadful facilities – we need an upgrade'. Years of gruelling work were needed to achieve this grand outcome.



**Student leaders present copies of the MEPS history to the official party, including Peter Harris, Heather McTaggart, James Merlino MP, Cr Tim Heenan, Senator Jacinta Collins, School Committee members, architects and builders.**

Phil also mentioned Kelly Carter's mural (unfortunately lost in the demolition). Kelly has been commissioned to paint another mural at the school entrance, depicting the school past and present.

Minister James Merlino said he lived at Montrose but the school was so wonderful he was wondering if he could move back to Mt Evelyn so his girls could come here. He expressed admiration for the educational philosophy which at all times accompanied the physical plans for the school, and praised Phil for his educational leadership.

James and other speakers said this had been a once-in-a-lifetime chance to get such an amount of funding and that MEPS had been ready with a case when the opportunity arose.

An inspiring story to come out of the rebuilding project concerned the allocation of funding. Schools were funded on a per-capita basis, regardless of any special needs of the children. The MEPS committee felt they already had sufficient for the school's needs. MEPS banded together with four other local schools and they requested that \$500,000 from each school's Federal funding allocation should go instead to Mt Evelyn Special Development School.

This was a great example of the community spirit that has been such a feature of Mt Evelyn Primary for all of its 100 years.

**From Karen & Paula (photos Paula)**

## Our October display

The Mt Evelyn Primary School Centenary was also the theme of the History Group display at the Mt Evelyn Exhibition Space.

A number of photos we'd never before seen were discovered in the school archives. A real 'find' was the ANZAC Day photo of the children in front of the Mechanics Institute. Classes were relocated to the Mechanics Institute (on the site of the present Public Hall) during the school rebuilding of 1924. This is the only known photo of the building, which burned down in 1950.

Besides the photographic exhibition from pre-1910 to the present, items such as a hinge-top wooden desk, blackboard, school papers and handwriting practice sheets were included.

Copies of the 'John and Betty' readers, provided by Paula, provoked many comments and some nostalgia. Those of us of a certain age remember these readers from the 1950s. They were criticised later for their gender stereotypes and stilted language, but people remembered them with affection and wanted to know where they could buy them!



**ANZAC Day, probably 1924: Mt Evelyn school children with their floral wreaths outside the Mechanics Institute. Photo MEPS archive.**

## Melba memento

In news just in, Jim Johnson tells us of a recital at the Mechanics Institute in 1924. Dame Nellie Melba did not sing but 'backed' the event (presumably financially). Jim, an antiques dealer, has acquired a framed program cover signed by Melba on this occasion. He has offered to make a copy for us.

Jim is famous in the annals of the Mt Evelyn Football Club as the inventor of the stab-punt. You can read all about it on the club history website: <http://mefnc.wikispaces.com/>

## Our November talk

Our November speaker will be Michael Foley, who will speak on the Lilydale to Warburton Railway. Michael is a Victorian Railways historian with a soft spot for the Warburton railway.

'The Yarra Valley has a definite feel about it and, for me, it holds a fascination about the people and industries that worked long and hard to develop it', Michael wrote.

In past years he has published railway articles under the banner 'The Railway Ramblers', covering all parts of the state from Whitfield to Thorpdale and Forrest. The focus was on enjoying a pleasant walk along a long-departed branch line, writing about what is there today and combining this with historically based descriptions of what was there in times past. Robert Bleakley, his writing partner from the Railway Rambler days of the early 1990's, will also be present at the talk.

The emphasis will be on Olinda Vale/ Evelyn/ Mt Evelyn and will include how the station operated, special trains that passed through, notable incidents, the personnel and their community involvement.

Using Powerpoint, we will take a photographic journey from Lilydale up the mountain to Mt Evelyn and down to Wandin. This will be a mixture of historical images and post-1965 photos, including an accident to a mixed train in the mid-1950's that has never been seen before and one of Wirth's Circus at Wandin.

Mt Evelyn had no Stationmaster after July 1933. Why was this so? We'll look at the business going through the station to explain what happened; that is, why Operating Porters and then an Assistant Station Master (Paterson) were considered by the VR to be sufficient to handle Mt Evelyn's affairs.

We will also look at the annual VR competitions such as Tree Planting and Station Decoration. There were two categories, one for New Work and one for Maintenance, either with or without piped water (Mt Evelyn was without). During Mr. Paterson's time, the main competitors were Woori Yallock (Mr and Mrs Hodge) and Wandin (Stationmaster Freestone). Roughly from 1940 through to 1957, they carved up the top three places in most years.

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## Digitisation Workshop

### Kevin attended a Digitising Records Workshop at the State Library 9<sup>th</sup> October.

Clive Luckman of the GSV spoke about digitising documents with an ordinary digital camera. Most of his talk was based on experiences with the GSV where they were copying hospital registers up to 900mm wide.

Quite good results can often be had with a hand held camera but can be improved by mounting the camera on a suitable stand. The camera used should be able to get a clear image at both the extremities and centre of the image to be saved. This is often a weak point for lenses other than 'flat field' types.

Clive used a Canon G9 mounted on an old drill press. This camera can be operated from a PC so as to minimize any jitter caused by movement while the shutter is open. It can also download images direct to the PC. He recommended saving any images in colour as many old records have entries in different colour inks, which can add meaning to a document.



Front page of the Herald Centenary Edition 15/8/1934, donated to the History Group by Rosemary Conroy. Kevin has been experimenting with photographing the pages.

No mention was made of how to keep digitised records up to date as technology changes. Storing images in multiple locations and diverse media was deemed to be a good idea.

Tim Hogan (SLV) spoke on Delivering Newspapers On-Line. The Argus, along with

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### Our November talk (from page 3)

Michael's current project is to research and write a work on the Lilydale to Warburton railway, to be called 'Rails Through The Yarra Mist'.

At some time in the future, he will be conducting guided historical walks along the rail trail, initially between Lilydale and Wandin, for the Australian Railway Historical Society and the Association of Railway Enthusiasts.

Michael added, 'Your previous work *Tracks To Trails - A History Of Mount Evelyn* was especially valuable in introducing me to the remarkable resource of the *Lilydale Express*.'

He attached some newspaper articles, mainly related to the Progress Association in Mt Evelyn, and has kindly offered to share any information he has that may assist History Group members with their research.

Don't miss Michael's talk on Saturday 27th November, 1pm at the (highly appropriate) venue of the Station House.

### Digitising records workshop (from page 3)

several other newspapers has been completed up to 1954 and can be viewed on line via <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>

Newspaper archiving has been treated differently, being done from black and white microfilm where possible. Tim was surprised to hear of our 1934 Victorian Centenary Edition of the Herald with a colour front page.

53 small regional newspapers have been shortlisted for digitising, including 'Mt Evelyn - Kangaroo Ground 1882-1917' ??? It's in their short list! For most of that time, Mt Evelyn either didn't exist or traded under other names.

Other sites to look at include [http://news.google.com/archivesearch/advanced\\_search](http://news.google.com/archivesearch/advanced_search) This site will give mostly American newspapers but does have some Australian ones.

For further information on the Australian Newspaper Digitisation Program go to <http://www.nla.gov.au/ndp/>

Newspapers available on Trove can be searched by key words etc., as it has all been processed by Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology. There are a number of newspapers scanned by local groups and available on line but without the ability to search for key information.

Daniel Wilksch (PROV) spoke on records being digitised by the Public Records Office. They are using a good quality digital camera mounted on a stand and it is capable of taking very clear images with just average room lighting. For many records that are bound copies, unless they are 'unbound', they are difficult to scan with a flat bed scanner.

**Kevin Phillips**



**History for everyone at the State Library: Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe gets a hug. Photo Kevin Phillips.**

### From Kev's rain gauge

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

Mt Evelyn	Melb	Melb Av
75.4mm	49.6mm	58.0mm

**Kevin Phillips**

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Opinions expressed in *Things Past* are those of the writers, not necessarily those of Mount Evelyn History Group.