

# Things Past

Newsletter 49

March 2012

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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## Dates for your diary

Bronwyn Higgs will speak on 'The Happy Hermits', Saturday 24 March, 1.15 for a 1.30 start, Mt Evelyn Station House.

History Group meeting: Thursday 26 April, 7.30pm Mt Evelyn RSL, Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn. TO BE CONFIRMED.

The authors of *Aborigines of the Yarra Valley and Northern Dandenongs* will speak at the Lilydale Library, 2pm Saturday 21 April.

Unveiling of Roll of Honour plaque, Sunday 22 April, 2.00pm Mt Evelyn War Memorial Garden.

ANZAC Day Dawn Service Wednesday 25 April, 6.00am RSL Memorial (in front of RSL Hall).

## The Aqueduct Tunnel

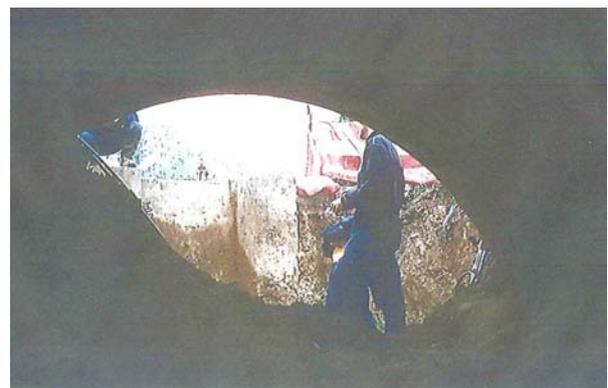
Many thanks to Mt Evelyn Primary School Principal Phil Comport for these photos of the entrance to the aqueduct tunnel.

'I got to take a few photos about four years ago when Tenix had the aqueduct open for integrity checking. They were taken in the aqueduct land next to 2 Hazel Street, Mount Evelyn', Phil explained.

The tunnel ran under Monbulk Road, to resurface as open channel at the entrance to the Melba Centre in Ormeau Road. Where the Melba Centre building stands it joined the older O'Shannassy Aqueduct (1913) and continued by pipeline along the side of the Primary School before crossing back to the south side of Monbulk Road. There is a path



along what was the edge of the (now filled) channel bordering McKillop Flora Reserve beside the Melba Centre road. It is part of the Aqueduct Trail and can be accessed from the



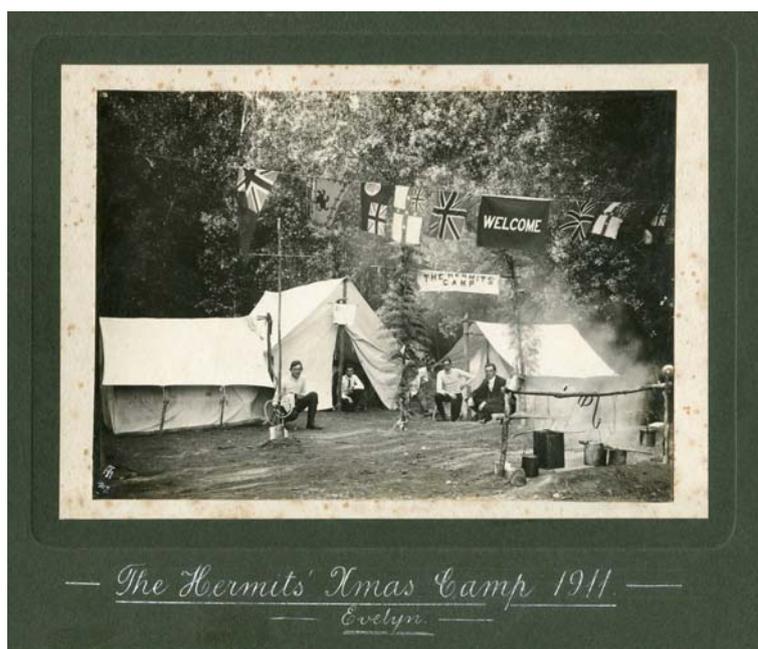
# Diary of a holiday at Evelyn

**Bronwyn Higgs describes a diary that accompanied the photos of 'The Happy Hermits' (*Things Past 48*).**

This diary is in the form of a purse sized, cloth covered booklet, saddle stitched and consisting of about 60 faint lined pages. The diary's contents refer to 'Mavis & Thelma's holiday', but it is clear from the outset that these are *noms de plume* and that the diary's actual authors are **Susie Cooper** and **Janie Morgan**. The authors make no attempt to conceal this, as both sets of names are clearly stated on the title page.

The diary relates a series of events and adventures undertaken by the two girls over a single week, spanning Saturday 23 December through to Saturday 30 December 1911. During their holiday, the girls met a group of young men, seven in all, who were holidaying at Evelyn and called themselves 'The Happy Hermits'. They shared a variety of activities with them, including a hike to the top of Mount Dandenong, afternoon teas and singing. Only two of the Hermits are mentioned by name, Mr Higgs and Mr Earle.

The diary also mentions other guests from Holly Lodge guesthouse and the owners, the Cottinghams. There are references to local



— *The Hermits' Xmas Camp 1911* —  
— *Evelyn* —

**The Happy Hermits' camp in 1911. The arch of greenery with the sign is new since 1909.**

places including the railway station, Mrs Paul's tea rooms in Lilydale and 'Spears' (Archibald Spiers' farm?) in Evelyn. The holiday began inauspiciously, as the following transcript shows.

## **'Saturday Dec 23<sup>rd</sup> 1911**

Thelma & Mavis journeyed to Evelyn for one week's holiday. Catching the 2.15 train from Princes Bridge arriving at Evelyn station at 15 min. to 4. When we found to our dismay that the two coaches were full, so we decided to walk to Holly Lodge, which was the name of the boarding house where we were to board for the week. As it was a good 1½ miles walk from the station, we soon got tired for the rain was beating down in our faces all the time.

At last, and oh how thankful we were, along came a lorry & it did not take long for us to ask for a lift, so up we got into the lorry & away we started, & put up with many a bump & knock & thought ourselves very fortunate indeed being able to get a ride at all. We never appreciated a lorry so much in our lives before. Well at last we arrived at our destination & after us each giving the man in the lorry 1/- for bringing us we went in & had tea & then a real good night's rest.'

The following day, Sunday, was Christmas Eve. The girls found that the church service was held in the State School. 'The service started at 3pm so in we went, & as there was nothing else we had to sit on the children's

**Continued p.3**



— *The Evelyn Railway Station* —

**A train steams in to Evelyn Station, 1911. The Station House was new that year but the garden and cypresses have already been planted. The photo looks north, towards Birmingham Road.**

From p.2

school desks. But we were not to remain together long as there was no one to play the piano, so they asked if one of us would mind playing so Mavis played for them.'

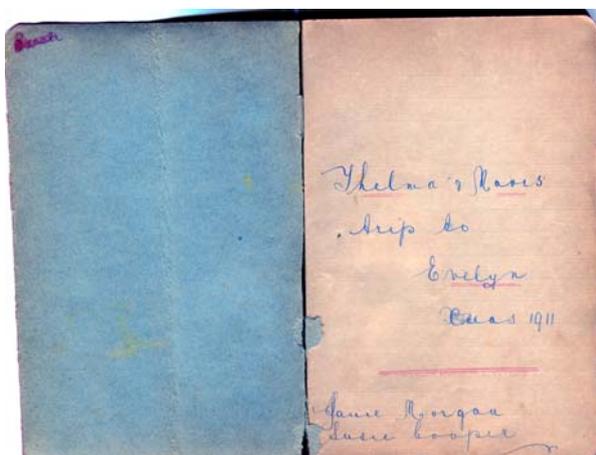
Other events recorded in the diary were a train trip to Lilydale for lunch and shopping, a wagon ride to the South Wandin jam factory, Frank Cottingham's wedding day, small happenings at Holly Lodge such as the shooting of a snake, Thelma getting bitten by a bull ant and receiving the 3d from the Christmas pudding. The most memorable expedition was the ascent of Mt Dandenong.

#### 'Thursday Dec 28<sup>th</sup> 11

The Hermits & the other girls called for us, then we started out. The mount did not seem so steep at first, but my goodness we had not gone very far before we began to notice it terribly. When half way up we came to a store & the boys went in & bought us out a lovely raspberry vinegar, oh it was bonsa.

Then we tackled the rest of the mount which was by far the worst, we thought we should never get to the top, but when we did, oh the sight was beautiful. We could see the bay & everything. We had dinner up there, & my word we did do justice to it & we stayed there some time & also had our names carved at the top of it. Then we journeyed back again & had another big glass of raspberry vinegar & a feed of lollies & saw where the accident was at the Devil's Elbow, how the coach was overturned just there.

Then we took our trip down the mount, which was by far the nicest but had to go through paddocks, over & under fences & all sorts of places. At last, after walking 15 miles we arrived back at the camp tired out. We were having tea at 9 p.m. and as the boys were to come up with us to spend the evening, they



The title page of Thelma & Mavis' diary



The girls had their photo taken at the Hermits' camp. Two of the girls in this photo are wearing sprigs of holly, perhaps from the tree at Holly Lodge. The girl at front right looks 18 or 19, the right age for Susie Cooper ('Mavis').

had to fly around, so Thelma & Mavis helped to dry the dishes & away we started, and as it was dark, they had to take lanterns, as we all had to cross a creek. We got back at Holly Lodge after 10 pm. Oh you truants again they said & laughed, but it did seem funny all coming in at 10pm to spend the evening. We were too tired to do anything Mavis & Thelma tried so hard to wriggle out of singing, but they would not let us off, so there was nothing for it, so we sang another of our duets. At 12 p.m. the Hermits went home, & we went straight to bed after a tremendously good day.'

On their last day the girls made a final visit to the Hermits' camp, where they were included in a group photo. The Hermits picked them each a bouquet of ferns and saw them off at the station. 'So thus ended the Happy Holiday spent by Thelma and Mavis at Holly Lodge Evelyn.'

The survival of the diary suggests that the girls met the Hermits again and presented them with the diary, which was kept by Fred Higgs. The photos and diary have been part of the Higgs family history collection for 100 years. Together they shed considerable light on the tourist experience in the first decades of the twentieth century. **Bronwyn Higgs**

Holly Lodge, now a boarding cattery, still stands beside Monbulk Road. The Devil's Elbow was a hairpin bend on the Old Coach Road, Kalorama, Melway 52 J9 (the name now applies to a bend on the Mt Dandenong Tourist Road near Upper Ferntree Gully). The coach accident had occurred the day before the walk. *The Argus* 28/12/1911, p. 5. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/page/368300?zoomLevel=1>

## DIY roadworks in the 1960s



Another interesting photo from Vicki Harrison. 'Looks like In the sixties if you wanted something done in Mount Evelyn you did it yourself! I remember many occasions attending street working bees to fix up the corner of Sycamore and Warrawee, even [up to] the early seventies,' writes Vicki.

The location is in Warrawee Road, with Sycamore Grove leading off at top right. Vicki's father, Russ Ellis, wields the pick, behind him in the trench is Gordon Mansfield, other men unidentified. The girl beside the ute is either Sue (most probably) or Gayle Ellis.

### A horseman riding by

Leslie Breen, now in his late seventies, is the great-grandfather of our granddaughter Charlotte. He spent a few years living in Mt Evelyn as a secondary school student.

Leslie said his father was a linesman at the SEC at Berwick for a number of years and rode a horse to check the lines as part of his job. Through having this skill he taught Leslie how to ride a horse when he was young.

Although he only lived in Mount Evelyn for one or two years in the 1950s, Leslie can remember York Road, the Zig Zag Road (Birmingham Road) and of course the railway line. He cannot remember the street he lived in but, from his description, it would have been in the North Road, Centre Road, Joy Avenue area.

Leslie used to go to Lilydale Technical School (now Lilydale Heights Secondary College) and used to ride his horse to school, parking it out the back of the old Dukes Hotel in Lilydale. The publican, Mr Bramich, gave him permission to tether his horse there. The last publican at the Dukes Hotel in the 1980s was also a Mr Bramich – the son?

At the weekends Leslie used to ride his horse down to the Do Drop In and give visiting tourists, mainly children, a ride on his horse for two shillings a ride.

Another tiny piece of Mt Evelyn's history!

**From Ben Ellis**

**From p.1**

Melba Centre entrance or through the school out of school hours or by arrangement.

Jean Edwards tells us that the tunnel and channels were periodically emptied for cleaning and checking while the aqueduct was in use. There was also a daily visual check (by vehicle) for any debris that might have fallen into the channel.

### Fire at Nether Wallop

Ian James has told us that the original Nether Wallop house burnt down, not in the Ash Wednesday bushfires but about a week earlier (see *Things Past* 46). A deliberately lit fire in the Warburton Trail cutting at Hereford Road spread up the hill along Kookaburra Lane and Old Hereford Road. Nether Wallop was one of several houses destroyed that day.

### From Kev's rain gauge

March is *luk* (eel) season. Hot winds cease and temperatures cool. Days and nights are of equal length. *luk* (eels) are fat and ready to harvest. *Binap* (Manna Gum) is flowering.

<http://museumvictoria.com.au/forest/climate/eel.html>

We have gone through a year of Wurundjeri seasons now. We will not repeat them, but you can always find the information at the Museum Victoria website.

Rainfall for February 2012 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and the Melbourne average:

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
76.4mm	78.25mm	59.8mm	47.9mm

**Kevin Phillips**

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