

Things Past

Newsletter 56

October 2012

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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Dates for your diary

October display 'The Last Light Horseman', the life of Trooper Joseph Clark, Mt Evelyn Exhibition Space, in cooperation with Mt Evelyn RSL.

RSL Hall Committee, Thursday 11 October, 7.30pm RSL Clubrooms.

Open Day and display at Gulf Station, Yarra Glen, Sunday 21 October, 11am-3pm.

NB: there will be NO general meeting in October – incorrectly listed on yearly agenda.

Launch of *Celebrating Mooroolbark*, 27 & 28 October. See flyer for details.

Tour of 'Appin', Saturday 24 November. Details to be confirmed.

Warburton to Carrum via the Big Dipper

Part of the Coalition's Sport & Recreation policy before the 2010 State election was to create a continuous cycling/walking trail from Warburton to Carrum. This would include a link of 7.1 Km between Croydon South and the Rail Trail at Mt Evelyn. Bicycle Network Victoria is pressuring the government to keep its word.¹

According to the *Mt Evelyn Mail* 18/9/2012, the State government has confirmed plans to develop the link. It states that funding of more than \$5 million will be provided over two years, implying this will be for the period 2012-3.

The proposed trail link would follow the 1913 O'Shannassy Pipeline reserve from Mt Evelyn (a Big Dipper ride down to Swansea Road and up to the ridge opposite) to the railway line between Croydon and Ringwood East. With minor additions it would continue along the railway reserve > Mullum Mullum Creek Trail > Eastlink Trail > Dandenong Creek Trail, which goes all the way to Carrum.² It would connect with the Tarralla Creek Trail at Croydon and with our own Aqueduct, Water Race and Olinda Creek trails.

Yarra Ranges Council's 10 year development plan for the Warburton Trail is now available for public comment and can be found on the Council's website (Minutes 25/9/2012, item 8-10). The plan does not specifically mention the proposed link to Carrum, though this appears in an earlier bike path document.³

In 1890, the 'Croydon, Mooroolbark and South Wandin Railway League' lobbied to have the



Whee! The power lines show the Pipeline route

from Johns Cres, Mt Evelyn. Inset, the reserve from Croydon South. Photos Kevin Phillips.

proposed railway line to Warburton run from Croydon station through Mooroolbark and Mt Evelyn, bypassing Lilydale.⁴ The route would not have gone across the ridges, as now suggested for the cycling trail, but up the valley of Olinda Creek. The name of Railway Road, Mt Evelyn, is thought to relate to this proposal. The road is nowhere near the railway that was eventually built. The name however is probably more recent than the 1890s. **Karen Phillips**

¹ Campaign page for this trail:

<http://www.bicyclenetwork.com.au/general/change-the-world/91734/>

² Map of the proposed trail link:

<https://maps.google.com.au/maps/ms?msid=214616030628958598377.000488663070ee33dbd3&msa=0>

³ 'Yarra Ranges Hike & Bike' 2005.

⁴ Marian Aveling 1984, *Lillydale: the Billanook Country*, Ramsay Ware Stockdale, North Melbourne, pp.111-112.

'In sunny Queensland' – The Blacks

More extracts from Gwen Hiscock's account of life on a Queensland cattle station. The language Gwen uses about the Indigenous people of the area reflects the attitudes of nearly a century ago.

In western Queensland these natives are far more civilized and faithful than those in the north. They would be hard to beat as musterers, and the young black boys and yellow boys – half-castes as a rule, ride like devils, and, having once entered the mustering camp, are quite content to 'sit down alonga cattle and boss'. Some of the old blacks, who have had their day with the 'big fella' bullocks, and are now spare hands about the station, often told me yarns of their early days.

One day ... Tinda, or old King Bimbally, said, 'Which way you come up all about, Adelaide?' I nodded assent, and, pointing a bony finger over his shoulder, he continued, 'Me bin dat way Adelaide, dere way Melbourne, dere Sydney, and dis way Brisbane'. I found out that Tinda, and some of his mates, had indeed taken cattle to the various capitals. They remembered Burke and Wills quite well, and had 'hid alonga bush when white man come up' many times when they were piccaninnies.

Tinda is the rainmaker, and woe betide any one who makes a noise when he is trying to make rain. Not even Lollypop, his dusky spouse, sees the gibber which he puts into the river, and, when the wind comes and brings clouds, the water melts the gibber, and he makes rain.

The gins are most affectionate and kind to children and animals, and old Maggie exceptionally so. We showed her an enlarged photograph of the two elder boys, who were away at college. The portrait had been sent as a gift to their parents. Really, the way the gin danced, clapped her hands, and crooned her pet names to those two lads was remarkable. She hugged the picture until I thought it would be smashed into thousands of pieces. Whenever she entered the room, where it was afterwards safely hung, she would talk to the lads' photos, just as if they were flesh and blood, and could hear and answer her.

These old gins have strange ideas about their dead and departed friends, and cannot bear to hear of, or speak of them after they have been buried. In the storekeeper's room was a photograph of a group of black boys, among

whom was the late husband of Maggie. Upon the days she was bidden to scrub that room she would rush breathlessly in, and turn that photograph to the wall. Whether she feared or dreaded some unknown evil I cannot say.

Poor old Lollypop had just heard that her father was dead. She immediately deserted her wash tub, and, catching up a log of wood, began hitting herself upon the head. A white man stayed her hand and offered sympathy, whereupon she squatted herself down on the ground and beat herself with her hands, first on her head and afterwards on her body. After this storm of grief, she began wailing, and such sobs and whining I'd never heard before from any human being. This was kept up all the day.

Late in the afternoon her 'old boy' (husband) gathered feathers, sticks, leaves, and coloured ornaments, procured some 'copi' of white clay, from the flooded country, and got everything ready for his old woman to don her mourning garb. After she was attired in these extras she looked like a 'white-skin', for the clay gave her the appearance of being white. As long as this clay sticks to the body, so long is the time of mourning (usually from nine to 10 days); but when it all comes off the black gin again resumes her duties.

During times of mourning invitations are issued to neighbouring camps, and the tribes troop along to do honour to the dead by holding feasts and corroborees. On several occasions I was fortunate enough to see these wild war dances, and the blacks in their copi-painted state, wonderful head-gear, and leaf-adorned ankles, are almost gruesome. ... Only the men take part in the corroboree, while the gins squat in a semi-circle watching and admiring, with their dark eyes dancing in the firelight.

Drought and flood times are not to be envied on a station, but they are faced by strong-hearted men, who never give in. During flood time, Micky, a little black boy of nine years, was dispatched on horseback for the mail. He had two 'swims', and, the mail running late, he had to wait. Eventually he started towards home some time after dark, and, half-way from the station, had the misfortune to drop the bag, that precious leather bag. Unfortunately he could not find it, so he simply tethered his horse, and camped for the night. At the first grey streak of dawn he found the bag, and

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Vale Gwen Watkins

Mt Evelyn identity and History Group member Gwen Watkins passed away on 5 September, aged 75. She had suffered a stroke two months earlier. Gwen lived in Mt Evelyn almost her entire life. She was known to many people from her job at Bishops' Garage and through her involvement with the Uniting Church.

Gwen was always helping others in the community. 'She couldn't do enough to help people', her brother Alan said. Gwen often took elderly neighbours out shopping and for appointments. She also liked spending time with children.



Gwen Watkins, 1936-2012

Gwen loved cats and had many cat-themed items in her home. Donations in her memory to Animal Aid, Coldstream, would be appreciated.

Memorials to great horses

Rebekah Blackwolf-Mitchell writes of a mysterious grave out in the paddocks.

'There were horse paddocks on the corner of Colchester Road [and Canterbury Road] in Bayswater North, where in more modern times the Circus sets up, or they used to have pony rides. There are factories there now for the most part. But a friend of mine remembers some 15 or more years ago, wandering around these paddocks and finding a tombstone on a grave which was dedicated to a racehorse. He couldn't recall the horse's name, or what became of its place of rest, or even if this horse has local fame.'

An Internet search turned up the following article: 'NEVER FORGOTTEN. MEMORIALS TO GREAT HORSES. Many memorials to famous racehorses are to be found throughout Australia. Some are merely railed enclosures which revive the memory of a favourite stock horse on outback stations; others are more ambitious, and tell of mighty deeds on the Turf, but all show in some way that a faithful servant is appreciated.

One of these is a memorial to Jackstaff, winner of the Grand National Hurdle Race of 1924,



'Where are they? The war steeds who shared in our glory.' The memorial to Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-1870) also commemorates the horses of World War I. Sculpture Raymond B. Ewery 1969, cast bronze & granite. Photo Kevin Phillips.

on the property of his owner, Mr. H. E. Connolly, at Bayswater.' *The Argus*, Saturday 3 September 1932, p.20, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/4496020>. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, Monday 7 July 1924, p.12, tells how Jackstaff beat the favourite, Rahda. It would be interesting to know if Jackstaff's grave is still visible.

Our October display at the Mt Evelyn Exhibition Space is called 'The Last Light Horseman'. Anthony McAleer, who is bringing out a book on Trooper Joseph Clark, the last of the 3rd Light Horsemen, provided the photos and information for this display. The topic led us to research memorials to the Light Horse and the history of horses in war.

The Adam Lindsay Gordon Memorial in Sturt Street, Ballarat, is dedicated not only to the famous horseman-poet, but also 'as a memorial to the 958,600 horses and mules killed in the First World War, including 169,000 that left these shores never to return'.

The panther's not out there

Sightings of 'Big Cats' have been reported for decades in the Dandenongs, the Grampians and Central Goldfields. A recent State Government study examined the evidence and concluded they were almost certainly *not* panthers, pumas or leopards. Most of the sightings were explained as large feral cats.

The report, from the Arthur Rylah Institute, added that the DNA evidence was inconclusive – which seems to leave us in exactly the same uncertainty as before. (*Leader*, 25/9/2012).

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proceeded to the station. When asked why he did not come home without the bag, he answered, expressively, 'Boss's mail good. Boss must have his mail quick fella!' What white boy of nine would have done that for his master? So, like Micky, the bushfolk make the best of everything, and they find that they have much to be thankful for. **By R.G.H., Journal, 27 April 1918, courtesy Robyn Taylor.**

A Light Horseman's housewife?

Fragments of the past can lodge unheeded for decades in the household sewing basket. My mother kept her darning wool and needles in the object pictured below.

The thing has a military look. It consists of a khaki pouch with a flap that folds round it (393mm x 116mm unfolded). Originally it had khaki ties, which could either tie it shut or hang it up. Those ties wore out long ago and were replaced with black tapes, which also wore through with use. It has no ties now. The inside has an unbleached linen lining, divided lengthways into three compartments by rows of machine stitching. Three pieces of flannel have been hand-sewn onto the pouch.

Just what is this thing? I think it's a soldier's portable sewing kit or 'housewife' (pronounced 'hussif'). It probably belonged to my paternal grandfather, Arthur Leadbeater (1880-1945), a sergeant in the 9th Light Horse. Another item from my mother's work basket is a little calico bag, 110mm x 92mm, marked 'John Chapman's Special Guaranteed Pure Selected Tobacco'. Coincidence maybe, but the bag is just the right size to tuck inside the pouch of the sewing kit. The 'housewife' first became part of the trooper's kit during the Boer War, but such things had been carried long before.¹ In *Gone with the Wind*, Scarlett O'Hara gives Ashley a small flannel 'housewife' during the American



The sewing kit open and folded. The tobacco bag suggests that the 'housewife' found



another role after the war. Photos Kevin Phillips.

Civil War. It contains 'the whole precious pack of needles Rhett had brought her from Nassau', a pair of scissors, two spools of thread and three linen handkerchiefs.² **Karen Phillips**

¹ http://alh-research.tripod.com/Light_Horse/index.blog/1819089/soldiers-housewife-the-hussif/

² Margaret Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (1936), Ch.XV.

A faithful companion

Rebekah Blackwolf-Mitchell (p.3) also mentions the grave of another four-footed companion.

'I have a little bit of history from the area nearby, which my father Roy Mitchell recalls from his Victorian Railways days.... Jerry the dog became famous [among] locals and Vic Rail men for chasing the Ferntree Gully to Gembrook train in the late 1940s and early 1950s.... When Jerry died a cross was erected over his grave, which, when destroyed by fire, was re-erected by two students – Garry Day of Scotch College and Barry Dunn of Caulfield Grammar – and [railway historian] Ian Barkla.'

Jerry belonged to one of the engine drivers. One day when blinded by steam from the locomotive, Jerry ran onto the tracks and was run over by the train. His grave is near Cockatoo. (J.E. Thompson & A.P. Winzenreid 1991, *Along the Line to Gembrook*, p.64).

Thank you!

Thank you to the thoughtful person who left us a copy of the book *Hard Yakka* in our pigeon hole at Morrisons.

From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for September 2012 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and Melbourne average.*

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
49.5mm	54.5mm	38.2mm	58.1mm

* McKillop, August: 86.4mm. McKillop readings courtesy Jean Edwards. Melbourne figures from Bureau of Meteorology website.

Kevin Phillips

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