

# Things Past

Newsletter 71

January 2014

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

PO Box 101 Mt Evelyn VIC 3796 A0051327F



## Dates for your diary

History Group meeting Monday 17 February 2014, 7.30pm Hardy House. Please note that our meeting nights have been changed to 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of even months.

## Ralph Proctor aimed high

Ralph Groube Proctor was born on 20 February 1915 in Hay, NSW.

He spent his early years growing up in Hay where he was a keen sportsman, at one stage holding the Under 16 junior high jump record for over twenty years. When he was in his teens his family moved to a farming block in Monbulk.

When Ralph was 16 years old he moved to Queensland, where he got a job as a jackaroo on a number of outback properties. He worked there for 10 years until the war started. He then moved back to the home of his parents, who were now living in Queens Road, Wandin.

In 1941 Ralph enlisted to serve in the Royal Australian Air Force. His brother Max had already enlisted the year before.

He began his training at Victor Harbour (SA) and Essendon, before being sent to Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme. He completed his training in Canada and arrived in England in early 1943. After operational training here he was posted to No. 295 Squadron under Transport Command, promoted to Flying Officer and put in charge of a crew of six.

During this period he was involved in a number of operations, including flights over occupied France to drop supplies to the Marquis resistance and flights over occupied Norway to drop supplies to the resistance there. He was Mentioned in Despatches for Distinguished Service for his part in these sorties.

His most important operation was on 6 June 1944, when he successfully towed a glider full

of British paratroopers to Normandy as part of the D-Day invasion. In September he flew a number of dangerous missions over Arnhem in Holland to help supply the besieged Allied forces there. He completed 28 operations in just under 17 months.

In January 1945 he finished his tour of service, returned to Australia and was discharged from the RAAF in July 1945. His and his brother Max's names are listed on the Wandin War Memorial and on the Shire of Lillydale World War II Honour Board.

Returning home to Wandin, Ralph eventually married and bought a property in McKillop Road, Mt Evelyn. He and his wife raised seven children, including two sets of twins. He turned the property into a berry and fruit farm and built their house there. He later worked

around the area as a field officer for the Department of Agriculture.

During his time in Mt Evelyn, Ralph contributed much to the community. He was on the Mt Evelyn Primary School Committee (he planted many of the trees around the oval), a member of the Silvan Fruit Growers Association and the first male to serve on the Birmingham Road Kindergarten Committee. He was on the Mt Evelyn Scout Committee, a member of the Mt Evelyn Progress Association and a lieutenant in the Red Cross Door Knock Appeal.



**Ralph Proctor  
1915-2013.**

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### From p.1

In 1957 Ralph joined the Lilydale Bowls Club. For decades he played pennant and social games and undertook coaching. He served as President 1978-1980 and was made a Life Member in 1989.

Ralph joined the Mt Evelyn RSL in the late 1960s and has been a member ever since. For over fifty years he was a familiar sight at the sub-branch's commemorative services, wearing his original World War II RAAF officer's uniform and medals. Ralph recently attended the Governor's Anzac Luncheon in the city, where he took time to talk with the youth present on the day.

In the 1970's Ralph moved to Coldstream and then in the 1990s to a retirement village in Lilydale. During his retirement he worked as a 'Lollypop Person' in both Coldstream and Lilydale up until his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Ralph has also been active in telling the story of his service to local students. He gave talks at primary and secondary schools. Even last year, aged 98, he spoke to a group of students.

In 2003 Ralph donated his collection of wartime memorabilia, medals and uniforms, to the Mont De Lancey Historical Museum in Wandin, where it serves as a permanent display. In 2004 he returned to Holland as an Australian representative for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Arnhem campaign. In 2005 he published his autobiography *Aim High – Proc's Journey*.

Ralph passed away on 8 December 2013 at the Lilydale Aged Care Facility. Survived by his 7 children, 17 grandchildren and 11 great grandchildren, Ralph is remembered as a true gentleman. **From Anthony McAleer**



**Ralph Proctor cut a dashing figure in his RAAF uniform. Above, Ralph greets fellow WWII veteran Len Polkinghorne at an RSL event.**

## ANZAC Naming Project

During the ANZAC Centenary period (2014-18), the Victorian government is conducting a commemorative naming project in partnership with councils.

The project is an opportunity for Victorians to acknowledge the wartime service and sacrifice of their military service people or locals who supported Australia's military cause.

Victorians are asked to research these people from their municipalities and provide proposals to their local councils. Councils will then decide which name proposals should be used to name or rename roads, features or localities.

There will also be the opportunity to record the history behind the names in Victoria's register of geographic names (VICNAMES) and record in VICNAMES the history of existing roads, features or localities already named in honour of service people.

See research guides at: <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/property-titles-and-maps/naming-places/anzac-commemorative-naming-project>

### From Kev's rain gauge



**Orchard Swallowtail Butterfly *Papilio aegaeus*, Mt Evelyn, 2 December 2013. Kevin Phillips.**

Rainfall for December 2013 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and Melbourne average.\*

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
82.3mm	87mm	38.6mm	59.4mm

Annual rainfall for past 5 years for Melbourne, Mt Evelyn, McKillop and Three Bridges (mm).

	Melb	Mt Ev	McK	3 Brid
2013	617.8	762.4	982.75	1285.8
2012	592.8	856.8	1036.95	1281.5
2011	833.4	1242.4	1432.75	1637.1
2010	730.6	1074.0	1154.65	1390.9
2009	452.8	665.3	911.00	1046.9

\* McKillop readings courtesy Jean Edwards. Melbourne figures Bureau of Meteorology: <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/data/>

**Kevin Phillips**

# Two pioneer matriarchs

Let us now research obscure women. Relying largely on genealogical sources, we can tell the stories of two pioneer women of Yarra Ranges, Ann Clegg and Jane Parr.

Ann, daughter of bootmaker John Parker and Elizabeth Heptonstall, was born 9 July 1820 at Emley, Yorkshire. She married Joseph Clegg about 1841. Eleven of Ann's children were born in England: Paul 1842, Jane 1843, Peter 1844, Elizabeth 1847, Tamer 1848, James 1849, Hugh 1850, Joseph 1852, Faith c.1853, Emma c.1854 and Enoch 1856. In 1851 the family was living at 37 Woolshops Street, Halifax, where Joseph worked as a tailor.<sup>1</sup> The Cleggs migrated to Victoria on the *Star of the East*, arriving in Melbourne in January 1857. The family settled in Collingwood, where Joseph went into business as a fruiterer. Two

more children were born: Jacob 1858 and Leah 1863 (didn't they love those biblical names!)

In 1867 Joseph took up a selection of 80 acres between Wellington and McKillop Roads, Wandin. Ann and Joseph, town dwellers till then, took to bush life in middle age. They operated a jam factory on the McKillop Road frontage their selection.<sup>2</sup>

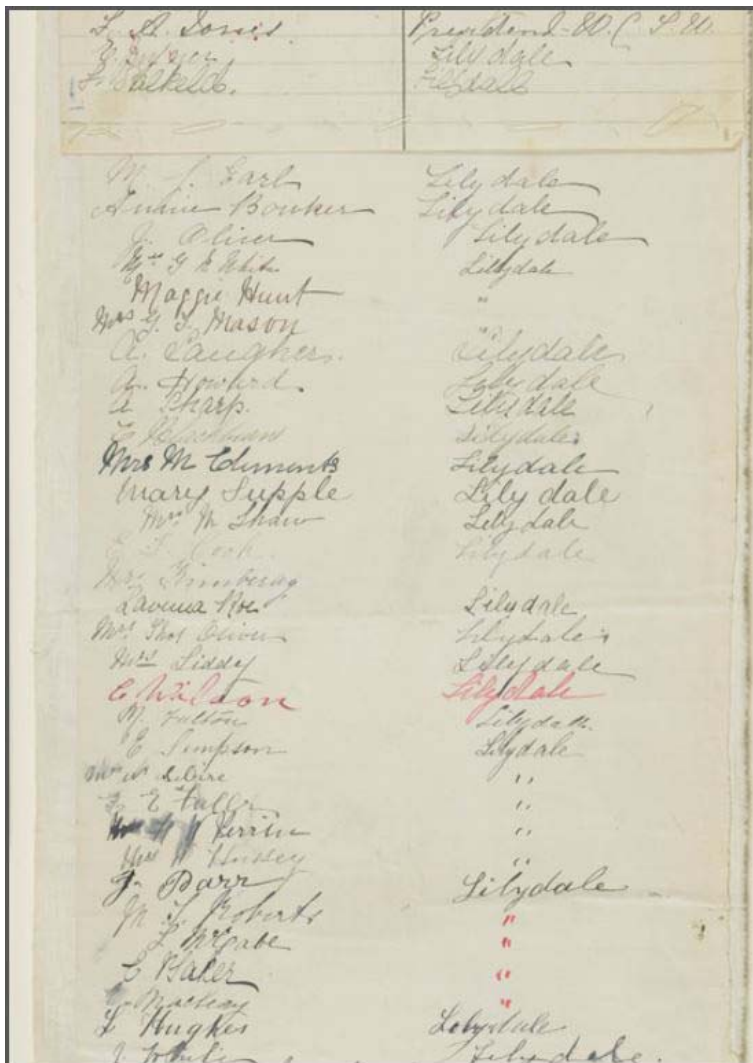
Five sons, Paul, Peter, Joseph, Enoch and Jacob, took up land in Wandin and what is now Silvan and Mt Evelyn. Three daughters, Elizabeth (Herbert), Faith (Taffs) and Leah (Sies), also raised families in the area.

Tamer (Chamberlain) and her family stayed in Collingwood. Tamer's first child, Charlotte Ann Clegg, was born out of wedlock in 1866 but was apparently accepted and raised in the family. Tamer followed her mother's example in having a huge family. She and her husband had another 14 children.

Jane was born in Somerset c.1838, the daughter of Shem Axford (1804-1881), farm servant, and Mary Ann Hurley (1814-1889), laundress. Jane's family came out from Plymouth to Port Phillip on the barque *Andromache*, arriving in Melbourne 24 June 1840. Seven 'colonial' siblings were born. Their father Shem 'kept a market garden first by the Yarra at Abbotsford and later at Mooroolbark'.<sup>3</sup>

In 1855, when she was only 16, Jane married 23 year old William Parr at Mulgrave. Jane bore sixteen children: Elizabeth 1856, Susannah Isabella 1858, Mary Jane 1859, Sarah 1861, James William b.1862 d.1863, Emma 1863, William James b.1865 d.1866, Georgina 1866, Ada Louisa b.1868 d.1870, Thomas Henry 1869, Charles 1872, Ruth b. & d.1874, David 1875, Henrietta Maud 1877, Eveline Amelia 1879 and another William James 1880.

The family moved east in the 1870s. From 1874 on, the children's birthplaces were listed as Lilydale or Wandin. By the time Jane's



Page 680 of the 1891 Women's Suffrage Petition with Jane Parr's signature (seventh from bottom). Reproduced with the permission of the Victorian Parliamentary Library.

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### From p.3

youngest child was born, her three eldest daughters were married and she had at least three grandchildren.

The Parr selections included land in Croydon, Lilydale, Mt Evelyn and Woori Yallock. Family members held several blocks in the Olinda Creek settlement between Swansea Road and the creek. One was the site of 'Modesty Cottage', which would become modestly famous as 'Walden Hut'.

A newspaper advertisement from 1886 mentions 'Mrs Parr's refreshment room' close to the station; Jane was in business as soon as her youngest child started school.<sup>4</sup> Jane owned two houses and 'premises' in Anderson Street in the years 1890-1892.

'J. Parr' of Lilydale signed the Women's Suffrage Petition in 1891, as did three of Ann Clegg's daughters-in-law. Ann herself had moved back to the suburbs by then. Her husband Joseph had died in Footscray in 1885. Jane's husband William died intestate in 1905. That meant his small estate worth £80 (a Miner's Right to one acre and residence making up £50 of the value) had to be divided between his widow and 11 surviving children.<sup>5</sup> The 1906-7 Rate Book listed Jane Parr, Fruitgrower, Crown [land], House and 1 acre, Olinda Creek. The following year Jane had freehold title. In 1910-11 she sold or lost possession of the property.<sup>6</sup>

The Clegg family had been a united one. Brothers Peter and Enoch married two sisters, Janet and Agnes Martin. Ann Clegg's son Joseph married Jane Parr's eldest daughter Elizabeth in 1875. After Elizabeth died in 1894, Joseph married his widowed sister-in-law,



**Cleggs and Parrs: gravestone of Ann Clegg's son Joseph and Jane Parr's daughters 'Lizzie' (Elizabeth) and 'Susan' (Susannah) Clegg in Lilydale Cemetery. Photo Kevin Phillips.**

Susannah Green, née Parr. Ann Clegg and Jane Parr had eleven grandchildren in common.<sup>7</sup>

Around the turn of the century the once close-knit Clegg family scattered. One branch moved to NSW and three to WA. It is easier to find descendants under the Clegg name in Fremantle than Yarra Ranges. Of Jane Parr's sons, only Thomas had a family and he moved to Whittlesea. Parrs now living in Yarra Ranges are not necessarily Jane's descendants.

Ann Clegg died on New Year's Day 1906, aged 85, in the Benevolent Asylum in Hotham West (North Melbourne). Her death certificate states: 'widow, 2 sons & 2 daughters, other particulars not known'. I conclude that none of her children was there to provide details. Ann was buried in Footscray Cemetery with her husband and her youngest son, Jacob.

Jane Parr died at her daughter Emma Larking's home in Ringwood on 12 January 1912, aged 74. The cause of death was 'rodent ulcer of face – 20 years'.<sup>8</sup> Jane was buried in the Baptist section of Lilydale Cemetery with her husband, her parents and two of her daughters.

How typical of the pioneer women of Yarra Ranges were Ann and Jane? I doubt that there was a 'typical' pioneer woman. **Karen Phillips**

<sup>1</sup> Barber family history, <http://www.barber.org.au/ui157.htm>; Descendants of Richard Clegg, <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~mywamob/clegg.pdf>; Pioneers of Silvan, <http://silvanpioneers.blogspot.com/2011/02/list-of-early-silvan-pioneer-family.html> Some genealogies list a 14<sup>th</sup> child, Job, b.1865; not found in BD&M index.

<sup>2</sup> A. & N. Lord 1981, *Wandin, its origins and early development*.

<sup>3</sup> Florence Chuk 1987, *The Somerset Years* in 'Came to Port Phillip in 1840': *Andromache*, <http://www.oocities.org/vic1847/40/and40.html>

Jane's death certificate states that she was born in Somersetshire and had been 73 years in Victoria.

<sup>4</sup> *Lilydale Express*, 14/7/1886.

<sup>5</sup> PROV, VPRS 28/P2, unit 717. Jane's signature as Administrator of William's estate identifies her as the 'J. Parr' who signed the Suffrage Petition.

<sup>6</sup> Jane made a declaration from the Austin Hospital that Joseph Hamill had resided on Lot 29J since 1905 (J. Newton 1996, *The First Selectors of Mt Evelyn*, p.22). Hamill acquired Jane's property in 1910-11.

<sup>7</sup> Three of their shared grandsons served in WWI; photo and war record of one, James Herbert Clegg, (KIA Messines 1917): <http://livinginballan.blogspot.com.au/2013/06/james-herbert-clegg-1891-1917.html>

<sup>8</sup> Death certificates: Ann Clegg no. 1978, 1906; Jane Parr no. 235, 1912.

## Galle, Sri Lanka

We stayed overnight in the colonial port town of Galle on Sri Lanka's south west coast. Persians, Arabs, Greeks, Romans, Malays, Indians and Chinese traded through Galle. The Galle Trilingual Inscription, a stone tablet inscribed in Chinese, Tamil and Persian, was erected in 1411 to commemorate the second visit of the Chinese Admiral Zheng He to Sri Lanka (Wikipedia).



Above, entrance to the fort at Galle; right, the 1750 Dutch Reformed Church inside the fort.

The Portuguese, Dutch and British have all used the natural harbour at Galle as their port. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Portuguese established the fortified city of Galle as the main port on Sri Lanka. The city was further fortified by the Dutch from 1649 and reached the height of its development in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, during the Dutch colonial period. The British took over in 1796.

We stayed overnight in a 250 year old building inside the World Heritage listed Dutch fort, which contains many interesting buildings. The town is undergoing a tourist driven rejuvenation, with many old properties being converted to art galleries, restaurants and boutique hotels. Galle was severely damaged by the December 2004 tsunami, with thousands killed in the city, but the fort stood up amazingly well to the sea.

We experienced a terrible storm in which we lost power and our room was flooded. Nearly 50 fishermen lost their lives that night. It was heart rending to see the families waiting on the beaches as we drove to Colombo the next morning.

**Paula Herlihy**

## When were we switched on?

When did Mt Evelyn become electrified? After reading your article last month on 'Holly Lodge', it took me back a bit because I grew up next door to it. I remember the lines going in along what is the main road now (was the back road and The Wridgeway was Main Road or Silvan Road). This was late 1950s, may even have been 1960. I remember because we had kero lamps and a wood stove before the power arrived. After TV started in 1956, there was a demand to be switched on.

**Peter Millsom**

According to *Tracks to Trails* p.50, several parts of Mt Evelyn township had power connected by 1928. Janice Newton writes in *Flower Farming in the Dandenongs* that many of the farmers had no power until well into the 1950s. 'The Marshalls did not get power till 1961, almost forty years after the nearby township of Mt Evelyn was connected.'

The Marshalls' place was on McKillop Road to the north east of Holly Lodge, so Peter's recollection of the power lines going in about 1960 would be correct.

**Ed.**

## Gryphon seat restored

The blokes from the Men's Shed have done a wonderful job restoring Mt Evelyn's 'Gryphon Seat'. The seat, which used to stand opposite the milk bar in Birmingham Road, has been in storage for years. It may have been called the 'Lion Seat' (the creatures are winged lions, not gryphons). These seats were around in the 1950s-60s. Where and when were they manufactured, can someone tell us?

The current proposal is to take moulds of the end pieces and make reproductions of the Gryphon Seat to place around the town. They could become a distinctive feature of Mt Evelyn. Cr Maria McCarthy, Men's Shed reps and History Group members have formed a 'Gryphon Seat Sub-committee' to investigate the cost and practicality of reproducing them.



The restored Gryphon Seat. Photo Kevin Phillips.

## Evelyn Station – the name change

Here we go again on the naming of Evelyn station. The newspaper extracts below chart the battle over the name change. We inch just a little closer to the origin of 'Evelyn' and conclude with a delightful possibility.

The first rumblings of discontent with the station name 'Olinda Vale' came from up on the mountain.

**OLINDA AND OLINDA VALE:** *OLINDA Friday:- The people of this township suffer a great deal of inconvenience through the Railway department having taken the name of the town, with "vale" added to it and having given this name to a railway station. That railway station is 13 miles away and is on another line than that which supplies the township of Olinda, distant 6½ miles from the railway. Goods from the city addressed to Olinda are very often sent to Olindavale. The Argus, 10 December 1904*

South Wandin residents were equally peeved. **SOUTH WANDIN:** *Goods consigned to South Wandin are invariably carried to Wandin, although the train officials know full well that Olinda Vale is the only station used by the South Wandin residents. Either one of two things could remedy the evil, viz., for this district to take the name of the station, or the station take the name of the district. Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian, 20 April 1907*

Residents evidently complained to the Railways, who wrote to Council.

**LILYDALE SHIRE COUNCIL**

*correspondence: From Victorian Railways, stating that the question of altering the name of the Olinda Vale railway station on the Warburton line having been again raised, the council was appealed to with a view of suggesting a more suitable name which will not clash with Olinda township to reach which passengers have to journey to Bayswater on the Fern Tree Gully line. The residents of Olinda Vale had suggested that the name be changed to "Valinda." - Left in the hands of the president to obtain the views of the residents in the matter. Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian, 1 June 1907.*

The result of the letter from the railways was a public meeting to discuss the preferred station name.

**LILYDALE SHIRE COUNCIL:** *The president said that at a public meeting held recently, it was decided to re-name the Olinda Vale station*

*Wandin South. He moved that the railway department be informed of the decision, and that a man be placed in charge of the station; and that shed accommodation be provided for passengers-Cr Janson seconded, and the motion was carried. Reporter (Box Hill), 5 July 1907*

The *Guardian* pointed out that the name was not the only problem.

**MONBULK:** *We note that the shire council request that Olinda Vale railway station be re-named, and more appropriately, South Wandin or Wandin South. To call a place standing upon a hill about 470ft higher than Lilydale a "vale" is an insult to the intelligence of those using the station, just as the thieving done there, whereby the name stinketh, is likewise an insult and annoyance to the people. Change this name by all means; and other alterations should also be made. Healesville & Yarra Glen Guardian, 16 August 1907*

The Railway department rejected the name 'Wandin South' but Council was not taking No for an answer.

**LILYDALE SHIRE COUNCIL**

*correspondence: From Railway department, stating that, as there is a station at Wandin it cannot see its way to alter the name of Olinda Vale to Wandin South, but will give instructions to the staff to see that all goods, addressed Wandin South shall be forwarded to Olinda Vale; also regretting that the business does not warrant the placing of a man in charge, but a shed and platform will be provided at the station. Crs Rouget and Taylor did not consider the reply satisfactory, and moved that a deputation wait upon the railway department. Carried.' Reporter, 27 September 1907*

Reading between the lines, it seems two groups of residents may have had different views on the name. Olinda Vale people appear to have favoured 'Valinda', the name of their Post Office. Residents of South Wandin preferred to have the name of their town as the station name, as did the councillors. The Railways remained open to discussion.

**LILYDALE SHIRE COUNCIL**

*correspondence: A letter was read from the railway department, stating that it would receive a deputation in reference to the changing of the name of the Olinda Vale railway station to South Wandin on Friday next,*

**Continued p.7**

From p.6

at 10 a.m.-Cr Rouget moved, and Cr Wallace seconded, that the department be written to asking that the hour be changed from 10 a.m. to 2.30 p.m., and that the riding members form the deputation.-Cr Taylor thought that the deputation should go with several names to suggest.-Cr Rouget was prepared to ask a number of prominent South Wandin residents for names.-Cr Wallace and the president thought a public meeting might be called, and a resolution was carried that the matter be left in the hands of the riding members to call a public meeting before Friday next. **Reporter, 11 October 1907**

Would a tale you care to know  
About a place where gum trees  
grow,  
A mountain place whose char-  
ming name  
Honors one of tree lore fame?  
One who knew and loved all  
trees,  
One who wrote to teach and  
please  
About the worth of trees to  
man,

And gave to us his grafting  
plan?  
John Evelyn was the man I  
mean;  
All of you his works have seen,  
He sorted, grouped, gave  
names to some,  
Yet knew not he Mt. Evelyn's  
gum.  
He lived, of course, in centu-  
ries past,  
When Evelyn's trees, though  
holding fast,  
And many of them, giants  
stern,  
Were in a land beyond his ken.  
Yet came the day this place  
was found,  
And gained a name by trees  
renowned;  
John Evelyn's fame suggests  
my story,  
Mt. Evelyn's trees would be his  
glory,  
Mt. Evelyn's trees John Eve-  
lyn's glory.

-Norman Naismith.

The meeting of South Wandin residents, if it took place, received no further mention in the press. At the next Council meeting, the Riding councillors' visit to the Railways was reported.

#### LILYDALE SHIRE COUNCIL

Cr Rouget reported that Cr Wallace and himself had waited upon the Commissioner of Railways for the purpose of ascertaining the objection to the name Wandin South being substituted for Olinda Vale. The Commissioner said one Wandin station was sufficient, but he would be pleased if they suggest another name that might be acceptable to the department. They then mentioned Evelyn as a name appropriate to the district. The Commissioner approved of the suggestion.—On the motion of Crs Taylor and Wilson the report was adopted. **Lilydale Express, 1 November 1907**

Olinda Vale station was renamed 'Evelyn' on 2 December 1907. We're still left with the question: *why* was Evelyn deemed so obviously 'a name appropriate to the district' that no explanation was needed? We may never know. Unless ...

Val Sheehan kindly sent us the poem at left (*Express*, 19 September 1952), of doubtful literary merit but great interest. The poet, one Norman Naismith, links the town name with John Evelyn (1620-1706). Besides his famous diary, John Evelyn was the author of *Sylva or a discourse of forest trees and the propagation of timber*. Naismith does not make it clear whether he thinks the town was named after John Evelyn, or just that the name was appropriate. 'Honors one of tree lore fame' implies the former but 'suggests my story' sounds more like the latter.

The South Wandin Post Office and South Wandin State School changed their name to 'Silvan' about August 1913. There was no explanation for the change but the new name was clearly suitable. **Sylvan**, also **Silvan**: 'of, relating to, or inhabiting the woods; consisting of or abounding in woods or trees; wooded, woody' (*Macquarie Dictionary*).

Wouldn't it be lovely if we had a literary, historic and environmental connection between the two neighbouring placenames – the author having been honoured with 'Evelyn', Silvan was then named for his book? Later editions spelled the name *Silva*. **Karen Phillips**

*Lilydale Express* extract from LDHS files, others from Trove: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/home>

# Crunching the numbers

The 1890s, the decade leading up to Federation in Australia, also saw the campaign for female suffrage. A handful of dedicated women collected signatures for a petition to present to the Parliament of Victoria.

The petition, tabled in Parliament on 29 September 1891, asked that 'Women should Vote on Equal terms with Men'. The original petition is made of paper pasted onto a fabric backing, wound on a cardboard spindle. Approximately 260 metres long by 200mm wide, it was called the 'Monster Petition' because of its length (see segment on p.3).<sup>1</sup>

The 1891 Monster Petition contains some 30,000 signatures, from all social levels, gathered in 6 months. A number of smaller petitions tabled on 27 and 29 November 1895 added up to more than that number, so in total over 60,000 women signed in favour of the right to vote.

Petitions against female suffrage were circulated also. Some women *didn't* want the vote, partly because they had high ideals of the responsibility of voting and doubted they would have time to keep themselves informed of the issues.<sup>2</sup> The obligation to vote loomed as just another burden for them – yet signing a petition against votes for women was itself a political act that undermined their arguments. The 'anti-suffrage' petitions, adding up collectively to 26,478 signatures, were tabled in Parliament on 11 September 1900. Altogether over 86,000 Victorian women signed a petition, either for or against female suffrage.

The population of Victoria at the end of 1889 was 1,140,100, of whom 524,230 were female.<sup>3</sup> That meant around 16% of the entire female population of the state signed one petition or another. For an immigrant society where families tended to be large, let's suppose 1/3 were aged under 21 and 2/3 over, i.e. that there were about 350,000 adult women in the state. If my estimate is close to the mark, nearly 25% of women in Victoria signed either a suffrage or anti-suffrage petition.

If your great grandmother was a non-Indigenous woman living in Victoria in the 1890s, there is close to a 1-in-4 chance that her signature is on one of those petitions. You have a 1-in-12 chance of finding her name on the Monster Petition of 1891, which can be searched online.<sup>4</sup> The other petitions have not been digitised.

Suffragists collected more signatures in Victoria than any other state. The signatures in support of women's suffrage outnumbered those against by more than two to one. The Victorian Parliament responded by granting women the right to vote in state elections in 1908 – 17 years after the Monster Petition was tabled. Victoria was the last state in Australia to do so.<sup>5</sup>

I wish somebody would make a movie of it.

**Karen Phillips**

<sup>1</sup> Parliament of Victoria, <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/about/the-history-of-parliament/womens-suffrage-petition/>

<sup>2</sup> PROV, <http://prov.vic.gov.au/blog-only/the-case-against-universal-suffrage>

<sup>3</sup> T.A. Coghlan, *A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia 1891*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/1398.01891?OpenDocument#Publications>

These figures assume that there was no significant overlap between the various petitions and that only women over 21 would have signed.

Population increases have not been taken into account. The Victorian adult female population grew by around 20,000 over the decade to 1900.

<sup>4</sup> Address in footnote 1. The database can be searched by name or locality. Women from the Mt Evelyn area could be listed under Lilydale, Montrose, Wandin or South Wandin. LDHS has a search feature for signatories from Lilydale, Gruyere and Coldstream: [http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au/suffrage\\_Lilydale.htm](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au/suffrage_Lilydale.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Australian Electoral Commission, [http://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/Australian\\_Electoral\\_History/wright.htm](http://www.aec.gov.au/Elections/Australian_Electoral_History/wright.htm) Victorian women could vote in federal elections from the time of Federation.

**Next month:** tracing the signatories.

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