

Things Past

Newsletter 77

July 2014

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

PO Box 289 Mt Evelyn VIC 3796 A0051327F



Dates for your diary

Athenaeum Tour: Anthony McAleer will lead a tour of Lilydale's historic Athenaeum Building, Saturday 26 July, 1.30pm. Afternoon tea to follow at the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum Harvest Café.

'Open House Melbourne' 26-27 July, see: <http://www.openhousemelbourne.org/>

'Uncovered: The Yarra Ranges Collection', Saturday 2 August – Sunday 2 November 2014, The Box Gallery, Yarra Ranges Regional Museum, Castella Street Lilydale.

HISTORY GROUP AGM followed by general meeting, Monday 18 August, 7.30pm Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road.

Arts and Crafts, anyone?

You've probably had the experience of admiring an unusual old house but struggling to date it. 'Early-ish 20th century – but which decade? Is it Federation, Queen Anne, Californian Bungalow or mock-Tudor?' Think: 'Arts & Crafts House'!

The Arts and Crafts movement, led by William Morris, originated in England in the second half of the 19th century. In a reaction against industrialisation, the movement encouraged traditional crafts.



Kenloch in Olinda, built c.1919, is a grand Arts and Crafts style house. Rose series postcard 1950s, State Library of Victoria. Look what's in front – another sphinx seat! See p.2 & *Things Past* 76.



Above, Quietways. Photo Kevin Phillips, 2012.

In Australia the Arts and Crafts style of architecture flourished for at least 30 years, from the 1890s to the 1920s. Associated particularly with the Queen Anne style of Federation architecture, it continued into the 1920s and influenced the Californian Bungalow style.

Typical features of Arts and Crafts houses were: steeply pitched tile roofs with exposed rafters under the eaves, tall chimneys, bay and dormer windows, leadlights, sometimes arched or round windows, built-in furniture, panelling and decorative use of timber.

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We have several Arts and Crafts houses in Mt Evelyn. One is Dalmeny (formerly Cirdec), the brick house at 10 Johns Crescent built for Mrs Hordern in the early 1920s. The architect may have been Henry Hardie Kemp (1859-1946). Another is the tall timber house at 14 Johns Crescent that has a chimney clambering up the side like a giant stone creeper.

Other likely suspects in Mt Evelyn include Fernlee at 68 Hereford Road, 86 Hereford Road on the Old Hereford corner and the 'Railway House' on the west corner of Birmingham and Channel Roads. The Victorian Railways owned the land along Birmingham Road 1904 to 1905 but I doubt that the house would be as early as that. The log cabins Wyuna and Appin were inspired by similar ideals of craftsmanship to the Arts and Crafts movement.

Down at the Lilydale end of Hereford Road are two more: Quietways (off Mandl Close, *Things Past* 50 & 55) and 159 Hereford Road. Cruising up the Warburton Highway, you can see further examples at Seville, Woori Yallock and Yarra Junction.

The emphasis on craftsmanship meant that Arts and Crafts houses tended to be 'one-offs'.



Above, handsome brickwork round a fireplace at Cirdec. Photo Louise Hordern collection.



Above, Cirdec (now Dalmeny). Photo Louise Hordern collection, c.1930.

For that very reason they often stand out more as individual buildings than as examples of a style.

Most Arts and Crafts houses to the east of Melbourne can be found in the middle suburbs, from Hawthorn to Blackburn. There are twelve surviving examples in Blackburn, constructed by builder Algernon Elmore (1882–1961) between 1910 and 1934. We have an indirect connection to them: Algernon Elmore's brother Charles married Miss Emily Cottingham of Holly Lodge Mt Evelyn in 1912 (*Things Past* 70).

Karen Phillips

References:

<http://federation-house.wikispaces.com/Arts+and+Crafts+Housing+in+Australia>
<http://www.achome.co.uk/internationalac/index.php?page=australia>
<http://www.buildreport.com.au/heritage1900.html>
A.Y. Fitzmaurice, 'National Trust Houses of Blackburn', Whitehorse Historical Society Newsletter 2009, reprinted in *What They Did*, 2013.

More on the Lion Seat(s)

Our winged lion seat stood on the traffic island opposite the milk bar at the top of Birmingham Road in the 1960s. Janice Newton recalls:

'The boys always sat on the gryphon seat at our bus stop ... sort of men's territory. We waited on the other side near the milk bar and Presbyterian church.'

Mary Golds remembers another seat at the top of the hill in Gear Avenue, with its back to the railway line. Mary is adamant that this seat had different creatures to the other: male lions with manes and no wings.

We would love to hear from anyone with information about the seats. Do you remember one or both of the seats in place and can you put a date to your memories?

Jim Spiers, the milkman of Mt Evelyn (1915–1997)

In 1993 Alex Morris, a history undergraduate at Monash University, interviewed Jim Spiers for Janice Newton who was working on oral history interviews for the history of Mt Evelyn. Alex now has a doctorate in history and I like to think this interview helped him on his way!

Many people growing up in Mt Evelyn in the 1950s would have known Jim Spiers, and his wife Thelma from the brick house and dairy on Birmingham Road opposite the kindergarten. Few would have known the length of his connection to Mt Evelyn or the scope of his commitment to community.

Jim's father Archibald, of Scottish ancestry, was born in New Zealand about 1873. After moving to the goldfields of Western Australia in the 1890s, Archibald bought a farm in Mt Evelyn with similar black soil to what he had known in New Zealand. Land was £10 an acre.

This 70 acre farm on the Monbulk/Hunter Road corner had already been substantially cleared and had an established orchard. The farm already had a homestead with two main rooms and a gabled roof. A slanting verandah came off this roof, under which there were two other rooms. Out in the front was a long verandah overlooking the farm. A brick dome-shaped underground tank dated 1896 was also on the property.

Initially Archibald boarded with Mrs Baker on Birmingham Road, then with Nurse Joy. In 1908 Archibald Spiers married Helen Jackson and they moved to the farm, which they extended to 100 acres with two further purchases of bushland over time. Here they raised fowls, pigs, milked a few cows and separated the milk to make butter, as well as growing fruit and vegetables.

On 2 December 1915 James Jackson Spiers was born, at this home, he believes. 'They used to just call in a neighbour or something like that if someone was going to have a baby'.

The family were Presbyterian but there was no Presbyterian Church in the old days so Jim and his two older sisters went to the Methodist Sunday School at Silvan. Mr Wilkin and family collected them with a horse and covered wagon.

Not long after, about 1920, there was a Church built on Silvan Road called the Union Church (becoming Methodist later). Archibald became the Secretary there. Jim said, 'later on when

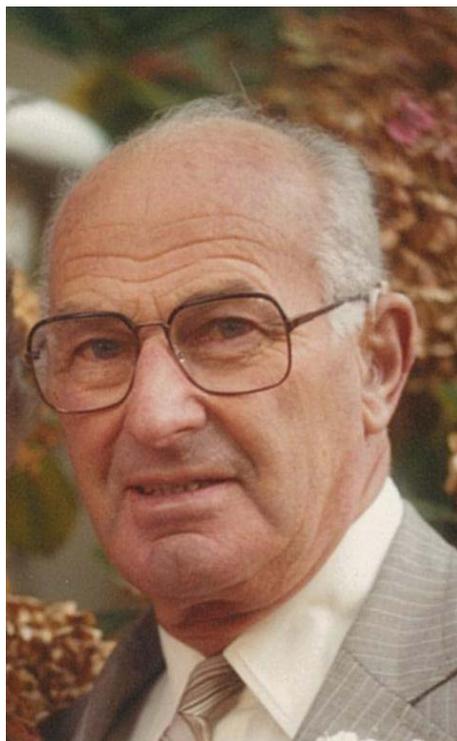
you start to get older you start thinking for yourself and you don't always follow what you've been told ... but I believe I was brought up as a Christian family and we got the basic principles. You know right from wrong.'

Around 1920 the Mt Evelyn general store changed hands. Mr Murray, the new owner, made an arrangement with Archibald. He would send a quart of milk each day for Murray's wife and mother in law from the farm by the coach which took passengers and mail from Burleigh (South Silvan) to Mt Evelyn station. A woman, Mrs Swindon, saw such a delivery while in the shop and suggested that,

with so many weekenders and holiday makers, it would be worthwhile to deliver milk. Archibald took up the suggestion and began deliveries with a horse and cart.

Jim started school at Mt Evelyn Primary School in 1922, when foot was his main form of transport. When he was 12 he received a bike and cycling became his obsession. He rode with many clubs including Ferntree Gully, Mitcham, Box hill amateurs, and finally a professional club, Hawthorn-Camberwell.

During the twenties when Silvan Dam was being built, Silvan was a thriving town and Jim used to go to the cinema there. In this and the next decade Mt Evelyn was also very popular for weekenders and day visits as many ordinary folk could afford to buy a small bush block of land. When war broke out in 1939, and things were 'starting to get tough' and



Above, Jim Spiers in later life.

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there were fears of Melbourne being bombed, many of the families moved permanently to their bush shacks and cottages.

Jim actually met his wife Thelma at one of these bush cottages where she was staying with her family, the Collins, in Banool Avenue McKillop. While courting Thelma, who was from Flemington, Jim would ride his bicycle from Mt Evelyn/Silvan to Melbourne, then together they would ride around Essendon, or up to Essendon airport to take a ten shilling scenic flight. Then he would ride home, 'just for a bit of a training ride'!

Meanwhile Jim's father's dairy business grew and ultimately Jim took it over. By the time Jim sold out in 1955 they were delivering milk to all of Mt Evelyn, into Montrose, Silvan and Wandin and he also had a round in Lilydale. Three utilities delivered milk which was bought on contract, seven days a week, every week of the year.

Like his father who had been involved in the Silvan Fruit Growers Progress Association, Jim was very active in the Mt Evelyn Progress Association, holding the treasurer position for many years. In the 1950s when the Association lapsed for a time Jim and a workmate, Dudley Wilson, began another one. The Chemist was the President and the Bank Manager the Secretary.

The Association lobbied Council to undertake works and improvements as well as taking the responsibility to do some for themselves. They noted when roads needed sealing and a street light needed to be repaired, as well as being successful getting mains water in the main street. Archie Carswell, the butcher, and Jim lobbied hard for those living above the old aqueduct to have access to running water.



Above, Jim and Thelma Spiers.

The Progress Association Minutes contained hundreds of pages of beautiful handwriting by Jim and other office bearers who volunteered their time to make improvements to their town.

When I visited Jim after the interview I found him mowing grass along the street, taking personal responsibility for beautifying the area along the verge of the railway line. He said, 'People said the Council should do this and the Council should do that. But who is the Council? We are the Council. We're the rate payers. We should get out and do things ourselves.'

From Janice Newton

Destroy only with permission

Marilyn Watson, a Raeburn descendant from Gooseberry Hill WA, sent us this report.

Our Lilydale correspondent, writing on Monday, says – 'The roads within the vicinity of Lilydale are likely soon to be denuded of one of their chief attractions for tourists and visitors. At the meeting of the shire council on Saturday the offer of a Mr Wilson, of £1 for the privilege of stripping wattle bark from the trees along the Healesville road between Lilydale and the lodge [Maroondah Highway], and along the three chain road, as far as Mr Raeburn's selection [Old Gippsland Road as far as Old Hereford Road], was accepted, on the condition that the trees were cut down and stacked.

The argument which appeared to weigh strongly with the councillors in accepting this offer was that the trees are at present stripped without their permission. There is, however, a strong feeling that the practice should be stopped altogether, instead of being legalised, especially as other councils are planting trees along their roads instead of destroying them.'

The Argus, 28 April 1885, p.7.

Don't forget our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Monday 18 August, 7.30pm
Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road.**

**Please consider if you would like to
nominate for a position on the
executive or committee.**

ALL WELCOME

The Johnsons of Westhill

John Hardy remembers Richard (Dick) Johnson and his wife Pick (her always-used nickname) who owned Westhill, and their close friendship with his parents Bill and Gwen.

Dick was a civil engineer in Malaya pre-WWII, having qualified at Trinity College, Dublin. He was taken prisoner by the Japanese, held in Changi and then on the Burma Railway, was taken to Japan and was in Nagasaki when the second atomic bomb was dropped. He was finally liberated by the Yanks. He hardly ever spoke of any of it and steadfastly refused to buy anything made in Japan. Pick and their two sons escaped through Singapore to Perth.

Dick ran an extensive market garden at West Hill and in fact invented trickle irrigation for his strawberries. There were strawberry and raspberry fields that yielded huge quantities of fruit. Dick also grew all manner of vegetables and was an organic grower before the concept was really developed.

Pick was a fabulous cook and she and Gwen had fantastic dinner parties both at West Hill and Emsworth. Because she had lived in Malaya, Pick cooked fantastic curries and Asian cuisine, and taught Gwen these cooking styles. As kids in the late 1950s and 1960s we ate far more exotic food than the standard meat and three veg!

West Hill was a fantastic house. I never heard it called Pine Brae. I remember the huge lounge across one end that looked across a lawn to the edge of the hill and afforded vistas to Lilydale and beyond. It also had a huge sunken bath that as little children we couldn't see out of if we stood in it.

The house had a homestead verandah across the front and side and a wonderful garden of at least two acres with sweeping lawns and huge azaleas and rhododendrons and other exotic trees. It was like Mt Evelyn's manor house! The West Hill land is now radically subdivided and covered with houses.

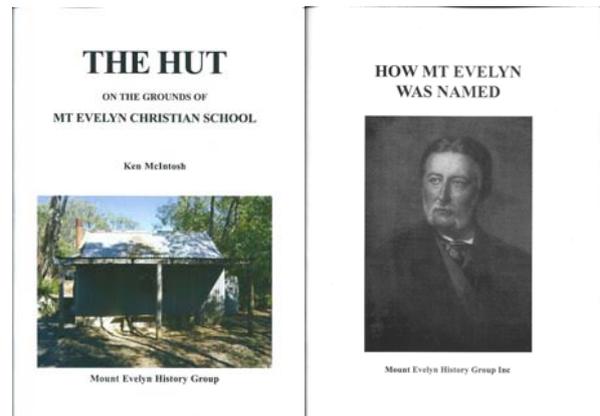
The Johnsons were a truly fine couple. They were Dad and Mum's best friends and the four of them were responsible for Hardy House being built. They were a real team in Mt Evelyn in the 1960s and 1970s. Perhaps a plaque to the four of them could be placed in the building some time.

From John Hardy

New booklets for sale

We have two new booklets available. *How Mt Evelyn was Named* by Karen Phillips replaces an earlier booklet, *Naming Mt Evelyn* (1997), but is not an update as such. So much new information has come to light that it was easier to start again than rewrite.

Karen has also revised and updated *The Hut on the Grounds of Mt Evelyn Christian School* by Ken McIntosh. Thanks to Beryl McIntosh for permission to update Ken's work and to Joy Carrick for her photos of the restored Hut. The booklets, pictured below, are \$6 each.



We are revising *Aborigines in the Yarra Valley & Northern Dandenongs*. Co-author Ian James, who tutors in adult literacy, made our day when he told us that people with reading difficulties have used the book to improve their literacy. We were pleased that people found it helpful and engaging. A proportion of Ian's sales support Belgrave Survival Day.

Our stall at the Community Market on 28 June did quite well (sorry if you didn't hear of it due to short notice). Markets will be held on the 4th Saturday of the month at the RSL Hall.



Above left, Karen and Kevin man the History Group's stall at the Community Market. Above right, Joy 'Wolf Ears' Carrick at her stall. It is largely thanks to Joy's book designs and photos that our publications make such an attractive display. Photos Greg Carrick.

The mystique of the mail

The letter box, folk art medium and focus of many hopes and dreams, may soon be a thing of the past if Australia Post senior management gets its way. Before they disappear altogether, here are our favourite Mt Evelyn letter boxes: 'Moo-cow', 'Ned Kelly's Last Stand' and 'Sleepers in the Grass'. Photos Kevin Phillips, June 2014.



From Kev's rain gauge

We've been able to compare Mt Evelyn and McKillop rainfall on a daily basis over most of May and June. Our place and the Edwards' are only about two kilometres apart but they experience quite different rainfall patterns. Hereford Road readings are usually similar to Coldstream's, whereas the McKillop figures (almost always higher) are more like Ferny Creek's.

Jean puts the difference down to the ridge at Ormeau Road funnelling Mt Dandenong's weather in their direction.

Rainfall for June 2014 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and the Melbourne average.*

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
86.8mm	140.1mm	49.6mm	49.6mm

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

Kevin Phillips

Len Polkinghorne (1923-2014)

The Mt Evelyn RSL is sad to report the passing of an esteemed colleague, Len Polkinghorne OAM.

Len was one of the last World War Two volunteers from Mt Evelyn and a man who devoted an enormous amount of time and effort to helping others.

New postal address

Please note the History Group's new **POST BOX NUMBER: 289**.

The box will be shared with the Mount Evelyn Township Improvement Committee (METIC).

Contact us

As a courtesy, please address any issues with the content of *Things Past* to the Editor.

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<http://mtevelynhistorytools.blogspot.com.au/>

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Gulf Station



July 26th, 2014
1-9pm

Winter Blaze

Bonfire, Live Music, Entertainment & Food

