

# Things Past

Newsletter 85

March 2015

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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## Dates for your diary

Bottle collector Ron Nutt is our speaker on Saturday 21 March, 1.30pm at Hardy House.

Book launch: *'Great Courage and Initiative' – The Heroic Life of George Ingram VC, MM* by A. J. McAleer. Biography of the Yarra Valley's WWI Victoria Cross recipient. Sunday 29 March, 2.00pm Mont de Lancey Museum, Wellington Road, Wandin.

'Bells of Peace' centenary of Anzac concert for the Casey electorate. A production with music, songs and drama telling stories of this area during WWI. Saturday 18 April, Evening, Mt Evelyn Discovery Church, Monbulk Road Mt Evelyn.

History Group meeting, Monday 20 April, 7.30pm at Hardy House.

ANZAC Day Dawn Service, march back to clubrooms, free community breakfast. Saturday 25 April 5.45am, Mt Evelyn War Memorial Park.

## The shack and the mower shop

Janet Newton's article on Gene Stroud (#84, continued p.3 of this issue) stirred memories for Andrew Meades. His grandparents built the 'shack' where Genie and her friends first stayed in Mt Evelyn.

I was interested to read that you had the information from Gene Stroud about Mum's parents' house. Mum had mentioned that her dad had worked with Genie but I had not thought about it in years.

The house was certainly a shack, it was a kit home from a company in, I think, Reservoir or that area. It was built in the early 1930s, so would have struggled to be more than 10 years old when the girls had their weekend away. One bedroom, lounge room, kitchen, there was a bit of a bathroom at the end of the



Above, the shack in Clematis Road, built by Charles Fleming. Below left, Norm Meades' Mower Shop in Birmingham Road next to the Hall. The Stroud home is in the background. Below right, the shop when it was awarded Best Presented Business in the Shire of Lillydale.





Above, the Stroud residence from the vacant block adjacent to the Mower Shop; 'by coincidence they ended up sharing a boundary'. The block came with the deal when Norm purchased the shop. Norm and Laurel ran a nursery from this block for a number of years until it became too much to run the two businesses and the nursery was closed down. Part of the nursery fence is still standing today.

front veranda, and reasonable size room at the back door. Outside dunny as mentioned in the article was attached to the shed and there was chook shed in the back yard.

We pulled the house down in the 1970s and the block became part of Mum and Dads' (Laurel and Norm Meades) place where we all grew up. It now has new house on it and our old family home has been renovated and recently sold again.

Charles and Mabel bought the property (59 Clematis Road) after being recipients of an inheritance, which gave them enough to buy the block and the kit home. It was in fact the only house they ever actually owned. Laurel and Norm were both raised in Prahran.

At some stage Charles had purchased the neighbouring block (61 Clematis Road) and gave it to Laurel and Norm when they married in 1952. A small house was built and a family started. Laurel and Norm never moved. They lived there for over 50 years.



Above, the Mower Shop a couple of days before it was demolished. Norm Meades had sold it long before and it had been run down and become quite dilapidated by this point.

I am not sure Charles was actually known as 'Chummy', as his brother was known by that name. There is a chance they may have all worked together on the wharves but we just don't have much information on the extended family. Certainly in his retirement years he spent most of his time in Mt Evelyn, whereas his wife Mabel (known as Sal) would travel up and down between Percy Street Prahran and Mt Evelyn. They never drove or owned a car, so it was all done by train. **Andrew Meades**

### More on Ernest Pearson's bugle

Thanks to Lenore Frost, who contacted the RSL, evidence has surfaced to confirm that the WWI bugle (*Things Past* 84) did in fact belong to Ernest Albert Pearson.

*Bugler E. A. Pearson, of Epsom road, Ascot Vale, who was a member of the Ascot Vale Bugle Band before he enlisted, has been awarded the military medal. The deed for which he received the medal was told in a letter from Major Knox-Knight, as follows - "One of my splendid lads, 385 Bugler E. A. Pearson, A Company, who is only a boy of 18, did magnificent work on Xmas night. He carried an important message right through Fritz's artillery barrage to the Battalion on our right, and brought the answer back, with artillery bursting all round him the whole time. He was knocked over twice by explosions, and when he got back was completely done up." Lieut. J. A. Carrodus also wrote in glowing terms of the exploit of the young soldier.*

*The Essendon Gazette and Keilor, Bulla and Broadmeadows Reporter, 12 April 1917, p. 1, <http://empirecall.pbworks.com/w/page/53589347/Pearson-E-A-Pte-385>*

The above quote (written before Pearson's true age was discovered) proves that he was a bugler in the AIF and even before he enlisted. This makes it almost certain that the bugle in the possession of Mt Evelyn RSL was his. A message from Mr Gordon Kinghorn, who donated the bugle, can be seen on Mt Evelyn RSL's Facebook page.

Lenore, a costume expert, has expressed doubt that the ammunition belt was military and has recommended further research. She thought it looked more like a duck hunting shotgun cartridge belt. We can however point to the group photo on the 37<sup>th</sup> Battalion website, which shows several of the soldiers wearing belts very similar to Pearson's.

## Genie Stroud: Kindergarten Play Leader with 'Chutzpah'

Continued from *Things Past 84*

*The house [in Mt Evelyn] was called "The Gums" and we had some of the best times we've ever had there. We were the only ones from dirty old Richmond that had a country home. It was such a novelty, you know... .*

There was a scheme at the time that allowed people to swap houses rather than build new ones, due to the war time shortage of building material. Genie still had in the back of her mind the idea that she was only coming temporarily to Mt Evelyn, and that gaining a house there would enable her to swap and move back to the city. Fifty years on ... 'there have been so many changes and so many chances since to go back but to our surprise we found that none of us wanted to go back.'

At first Genie and Gordon commuted, as planned, to Melbourne to work, later trying a (short-lived) wood yard business in the main street. 'We sold chopped firewood but ... we didn't know about Mt Evelyn people who didn't pay their bills. Since wood wasn't that dear, it wasn't worth suing all the blighters that owed us money.'

Early on, before she had children, Genie missed the close contact with people she had experienced in Richmond. They did have friends visiting from Melbourne.

*In those days to come to Mt Evelyn with a couple of children was a trek. You'd start off early in the morning and you'd come loaded with everything. You'd get out at the station here and you'd stay for the day. People don't visit like that now. They 'pop in'. 'We were just going up to so and so, so we thought we'd pop in and see how you were, on the way.'*



Above, Gene Stroud with Dr Bill Hardy and some of the Mt Evelyn Scouts.



Above, Gene receives a medal from the Governor of Victoria for her work with St John Ambulance.

*And they're gone before the seat's warm! But in our day, people visited. You'd cook for a week, you know. You'd turn out your crusted pies and your jam sponges. It was an adventure for everyone. The kids used to get out in the yards and dig, fight and play cricket and break windows and you knew you had visitors. But now, you think you have, but you're not sure ... .*

Soon Genie began to make friends and join some groups. 'They sort of get you on different committees. You go to the Health Centre, quite innocent, to weigh your baby and you come out a member of the Nursing Mothers' Association or something.' Once she went on the flower roster at the Church.

*I spent hours making arrangements with chrysanthemums and wattle. They looked beautiful, all wired together. Soon after, somebody paid me a very tactful visit. They came and asked me would I please not do it again because half the congregation were allergic to wattle. They said all the things I didn't know about the bush, and I'd nearly killed half the congregation, but, you know, one learns.*

Over the years Genie joined, for example, the Alpha Club, working for Kew Cottages, the Kindergarten, the Scouts, the Football Club and the Walking Stick Club. Ultimately she was granted a number of life memberships and awarded Lilydale's first Citizen of the Year in 1977, recognition of her community service to organisations long beyond her own son's involvement in football or Scouts. 'I don't join things just to have my name on a list. What I start, I work through.'

**Continued p.4**

**From p.3**

*Since I've been married I've had three professional jobs and I haven't got one qualification for any one of them. I've been a teacher, a nurse and an occupational therapist and I haven't got a piece of paper to say I can do any of those things. And I was darn good at it! Things happened to me without planning.*

Genie got the kindergarten job because the assistant kept calling in sick. She was on the committee and had a phone number because of the business, so they kept ringing her to fill in. She worked for ages as a volunteer until they were able to organise a position as a paid assistant at £3 a week. After almost 30 years Genie retired in 1982, as the treasure of her life, grandson Matthew, was starting at the kindergarten and 'it wouldn't be fair on the other teacher and children' (*Lillydale and Yarra Valley Express*, 23/2/1982, p.3).



**Community leaders at the Kinder, above from left: Gwen and Bill Hardy, Barbara Millard, Genie Stroud and Joyce Evans at Genie's retirement 'do'.**

Gene worked at Rosine as a nurse for a while (receiving a lucky offer when worried about a financial shortfall for a planned holiday during her long service leave). After a wonderful three month world trip with the Lilydale Rifle Shooters,

*I was stony again, and when I say stony, I mean stony. That's when you've gone through all your pockets, and looked under the lino, and ... nothing! John came round and said, 'I've got a bit of news for you, Mum. The week you went away you won the ten dollars down at the football club' ... . That ten dollars kept me going until my first pay back at the Kindergarten.*

After another holiday a friend came around and suggested Genie do some craftwork at Moruya, Wantirna. After a talk with the matron,

*I came home that night with a job, starting Monday morning, as an occupational therapist! I did that for 12 months until I had an operation and had to leave again.*

*I filled in for a woman who needed a few week's break at the Melba Centre Op Shop 'and six years later they pulled the Op Shop down around us and I was still there. The woman never came back. This is how things happen to me.*

*I ran the (St John) ambulance brigade for twelve years. I think I was probably the first female superintendent of a male brigade. I got a medal from the Governor. I've been a football trainer. I've got more trophies for not playing football than my sons ever got for playing! I wound up a football trainer because I worked in the Ambulance Brigade. A kid died down there and I got him back. Just part of what I do. And then as the kids started to get hurt, they started to bring them to me ... . I didn't go to the football one day and somebody came to the house and asked where I was on Saturday. "But we were relying on you!"*

Mt Evelyn did rely on Genie Stroud and others like her. She is remembered for her service and stories. The following story was not recorded but is imprinted in my memory. Every time someone mentions the need for extra tickets I think of Gene Stroud, Play Leader 'at risk'.

The Birmingham Road Mt Evelyn Kindergarten had some play equipment in the old days that included an ancient petrol bowser and an old van. Children used to pretend they were on a bus and taking rides and so on and teachers gave them some old paper tickets to hand in to the driver or conductor.

**Continued p.6**

# Yarra Ranges Heritage Network – Oral History Workshop

Presented by: Sarah Rood (Way Back When)

On 11 February I attended my second workshop on Oral History given by Sarah Rood. After my first I had attempted to put some of the information to use and found I had more difficulties at a higher level, and more questions! As a result I was able to get a lot more out of this workshop, and understand the issues more clearly.

Initially oral history was written accounts of wars and pioneering settlement, written by educated people, mainly men, and resulted in a largely right wing view of history. Early technology required that interviewees come into a studio in a highly artificial setting. With inexpensive and easy to use technology came a 'democratisation of history', the rise of social histories and minority histories. A more left wing history. Sarah said many other things, but this message was the one that inspired me from the day.

'Once recorded, the oral history has a life of its own and lives forever', beyond the person speaking or the interviewer. Even if the interviewer had one purpose for the interview, the experiences can be used to shed light on other aspects of history by other users. 'Oral history became the great levelling primary source and it fit hand in hand with the social history movement'. Oral history 'brings to light a history that written documentation – or a lack of written documentation had effectively silenced ... it is do-able and it can give voice to anyone who wants to be heard.'

Oral histories are of course subject to the interviewee's viewpoints and ability to recall. A fascinating criticism of Oral History is that 'the collective memory can replace individual memory. Examples of Forgotten Australians or Holocaust testimony – grand narratives that communities subscribe to can replace individual memories and experiences.'

I also got a lot more from the discussions of ethics and responsibilities. What right does an interviewer have to lead an interviewee into a certain path, perhaps one which will cause pain? But should one avoid the darker sides of life? Once the interview is recorded and transcribed, who owns it?

On the practical side, I got a lot more out of the process my second time through. (The following steps are mine plus Sarah's).

STEP 1 Set up your Aims for your project; define your project Scope, including the number of interviews, the time lines and how the results will be published (e.g. on Trove or a project website); define your project's End Product and determine the resources necessary to achieve that; create an interview short list from those available to suit your project aims

STEP 2 Contact the interviewees using a phone conversation checklist to cover all points; gather contact details and make up a spreadsheet or table of information; send formal introductory letter with rights agreement form, suggested interview time and phone number if need to change; phone one week later to confirm interviewee is still interested and to confirm interview date and time. Update information at each step.

STEP 3 Plan themes, questions (specially open or 'roomy' ones), and structure your interview. Ensure equipment is working and have a backup.

STEP 4 Conduct interview and collect rights agreement form.

STEP 5+ Write interview summary immediately after the interview; upload/transcribe as suitable; send copy of transcription to interviewee with covering letter indicating time frame for return; receive edits and alter transcripts accordingly (a lot of discussion during the workshop was around what, if any, alterations are ethical for what reasons!); send final transcripts (and copies of interviews if requested) to interviewees; place complete set of transcripts, permission forms and files in at least TWO different responsible places – historical society, council, etc.

STEP 6 Complete any work related to project End Product.

Following discussion about equipment, file types and sizes, and digital file housekeeping, including discussion about the equipment brought along by participants (which I found very useful) we workshopped steps 4 and 5 of the step process above, once as interviewer and once as interviewee. I was paired with History Group member Vivian Lyons and we both enjoyed the process! The catering was good too!

*Paula Herlihy*

From p.4

All was going well one day with the children happily playing outside. Genie was inside when a little boy rushed in and proclaimed, 'My dick hurts!' Genie said, 'That's no good. Let's check it out then. She removed his pants and had a good look. 'Doesn't seem like anything is wrong. It's not red or anything. Run off and play. I'm sure it will be all right.' Off he went to play outside again.

A few minutes later he returned and announced more emphatically, "MY DICK HURTS!" 'Oh dear', said Genie. 'That's no good at all. I'd better check again more thoroughly.' So she removed his pants and looked very carefully all around to try to find out what was causing the pain. Finding nothing again, she said, 'I can't find anything wrong. I am sure it will go away soon. The pants are not too tight or anything.' Off he went, somewhat disgruntled.

A few minutes later, the little boy's friend stomped into the room and crossly demanded, 'Why won't you give my friend MORE TICKETS????! We've run out and want to play bus driver.'

Genie reflected that at another time or place she might not have kept her job. We are glad that she did. **Janice Newton. Photos courtesy John Stroud.**

### ***Morrison House Changed a Community – incorrect credit***

Paula Herlihy regrets that an illustration and verse reproduced as Figure 27 in *Morrison House Changed a Community* was incorrectly credited. At the time the original Morrison House newsletter was produced, David White was careful to point out that he had copied the house pictures from a previous work, and that Kay White had adapted a verse (significantly) from the same work. When these sketches were used in the book, David White was cited but the original artist was not. The sketches, and the idea for the verse, were based on Joan Walsh Unglund's *Look Out The Window*, copyright asserted in 1959, first published by Collins, Great Britain, 1962.

### **Can you help?**

The RSL and History Group would love to hear from anyone with expertise in casting concrete plinths. The Avenue of Honour committee has decided to commemorate the Avenue with bronze plaques attached to plinths in the RSL Memorial Garden. Please contact Anthony McAleer if you can assist: mtevrsl@gmail.com

### **Bees in the eaves**

These bees have been living in the wall cavity of an old house for 50-odd years. More recently they have extended their quarters with this stalactite-shawl structure under the eaves (photo below by Kevin Phillips).



We'd rather the bees go to a good home than risk being poisoned when the house is demolished. If you know any bee-keepers who might want another swarm, please contact Kevin, email: kev.phillips@bigpond.com, mobile: 0407 306 157.

### **From Kev's rain gauge**

Rainfall for February 2015 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and Melbourne average.

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
45.2mm	40.0mm	37.8mm	48.0mm

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

**Kevin Phillips**

### **Contact us**

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

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