

Things Past

Newsletter 90

August 2015

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

PO Box 289 Mt Evelyn VIC 3796 A0051327F



Dates for your diary

History Group AGM and general meeting, Monday 17 August, 7.30pm Hardy House.

'Oil Paint and Ochre, the incredible story of William Barak and the de Purys', 29 August – 22 November, Yarra Ranges Regional Museum. See Museum website for program of events: yarraranges.vic.gov.au/museum

Launch of *Gwen & Bill Hardy, dynamos of Mt Evelyn community life*, Saturday 12 September 1.30pm Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn.

Saving Mt Evelyn's Aqueduct Land

The first aqueduct through Mt Evelyn was the O'Shannassy, constructed during 1913. It ran across the rural area from Wandin and past Mt Evelyn Primary School, dividing the township of Mt Evelyn. People who lived above the channel were not allowed to use the water (in case the additional run-off polluted Melbourne's water supply). Bridges over the channel were located at York Road, Channel Road and Westhill Drive, restricting access.

In the 1930s when the Silvan Dam was constructed, the aqueduct was re-routed into Silvan and out again – to link with the old aqueduct at the 'Melba Centre'. The channel through Mt Evelyn was enlarged.

Although it was mainly an open channel, there were sections in pipes, and siphon basins at the beginning of these sections.

Rice's basin was located just above Priestley Crescent, then the water ran in 3 steel pipelines to Smith's Basin on what is now known as Hazel Street (then McKillop Road). It ran in a concrete 'grade siphon' and tunnel diagonally across Monbulk Road. At Joy Avenue Fall's Basin began the siphon parallel to the Lilydale-Warburton rail line. There were concrete bridges at York Road, Channel Road and Westhill Drive. Ellis Basin, above Johns Crescent, headed the siphon down to and under Lilydale-Montrose Road and the Olinda Creek and up to the Olinda Reservoir.

The Board of Works patrolled the channel by driving beside it each day.

In February 1972 the Aqueduct was decommissioned, having been replaced by multiple pipelines on a more direct route on the west side of Olinda Creek.



Decommissioned aqueduct between Priestley Cres and Hunter Road, 1979. Photo David Edwards.

On Thursday 13 June 1974 more than 100 people attended a public meeting in Mt Evelyn. One outcome was the formation of the Mount Evelyn Environment Protection and Progress Association with 'specific thought to retaining the Mount Evelyn Aqueduct in its natural state, for the benefit of the people of Mount Evelyn.' The deputy Engineer of Lillydale Shire, Mr. Thompson, showed a plan for recreational use, for setting aside the Melba Centre site, and for returning the rural land (beyond Hunter Road) to farmers 'who had been inconvenienced for years'.

Alan Booth, estate agent and secretary of MEEPPA, supported the use of the land through the township for public purposes, but little mention was made of it at MEEPPA in the following years. The MMBW retained control of the decommissioned aqueduct through Mount Evelyn while the township was sewered. Along with the excess

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The Scholars: John (1920-2014) and Mary (1918-2010) Macdonald Part 1

When I attended the 60th anniversary of the Mt Evelyn Presbyterian Church in 1996, I was intrigued to notice after the celebratory service that John Macdonald's order of service was festooned with undecipherable mathematical formulae.

John and Mary Macdonald were interviewed in December 1993 about their association with Mt Evelyn that spanned the 1920s till the 1950s. It was an association that enriched Mt Evelyn institutions such as the Progress Association, the Kindergarten and Presbyterian Church, and contributed to the documentation and interpretation of Mt Evelyn's history. John's early academic achievements also brought him some local notoriety.

John was born in Brighton in 1920 to a Scottish Presbyterian father and an Australian mother from a professional family who were prominent as teachers in north eastern Victorian goldfields. John's parents met when his mother moved to Melbourne for a more stable job as a telephonist.

When John's father died of tuberculosis in 1925, his widowed mother moved to the healthier country air of Mt Evelyn with her two sons, purchasing two blocks of land and a Wridgway-built house from J.G. Chew on the corner of Bailey and Spring Roads. They survived on a war pension of £2:19:6 a week, which was slightly more generous than the sustenance allowance for the unemployed at the time.

Unfortunately, soon after the move, John's mother Isabella herself contracted tuberculosis.



Above, brothers John (right) and Donald, around 1932.



Above, Isabella Macdonald with her sons John (on swing) and Donald, about 1928.

For part of 1927 she was confined to a sanatorium in Mont Albert while John was 'farmed out' to the home of the Mt Evelyn Primary School Headmaster, Mr Jamieson. John's brother Donald was billeted with various aunts.

During her time in the sanatorium, Isabella became very interested in the Salvation Army. When she returned to Mt Evelyn she was the sole representative of this Church, singing and speaking on a regular basis near the Railway Station. She had some encouragement from other members based in Healesville but, when the Presbyterian Church began in Mt Evelyn in 1933, Isabella thought she would be more useful working to help this church become established, so ended her association with the Salvation Army.

John had an intermittent experience of childhood in Mt Evelyn but he remembered films at the Mechanics Institute Hall and he enjoyed exploring the Dandenongs by himself, viewing the wildflowers and, on one special occasion, sighting a platypus in the Olinda Creek. He also recalled the area around Billy Goat Hill being referred to as the 'slums of the Shire' and people who were 'down on their luck' living in prefabricated huts, or timber frames lined with hessian.

John showed a very early aptitude for mathematics which was nurtured by his fostering headmaster and his mother's father. He became a precocious scholar, gaining his merit certificate (year 8 equivalent) aged 9 years and 9 months, after completing double year syllabuses on three separate years. His final year was at Canterbury Primary School while his mother recuperated at a Blackburn boarding home.

Being considered in 1930 too young to go to secondary school, John remained home at Mt Evelyn, doing a correspondence course in Latin and taking up Sloyd (creative woodwork) at Lilydale. In 1931 he took up his scholarship to

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Scotch College, where he boarded for most of the years between 1931 and 1936.

Following successful completion of his schooling at Scotch College, John completed a degree in mathematics and physics at Melbourne University. His studies excluded him from military service but the unsettled times made normal post-graduate work difficult, so he pursued something 'more tangible'. This involved a job at the Munitions Supply Laboratories in the Department of Defence at Maribyrnong, where he did mathematics/stress calculations. For a time he was seconded to the Mt Stromlo observatory in Canberra, where he worked on optical munitions. John spent his entire career with that government organisation in Maribyrnong.

While at Melbourne University, John met co-student Mary Kelly when both their families holidayed with common friends at a Gippsland farm. Mary was born in 1918 in Calcutta, India, to Australian Baptist Missionary parents. In 1928 the family visited Australia for furlough but when they returned to India, Mary remained behind in Australia. She stayed with her mother's mother in Adelaide for a year, then attended University High School while boarding with a family in Melbourne. She completed a BA in Classics and Philosophy with honours at Melbourne University in 1939.

Just as John moved towards studies which would help the war effort, so Mary too took up a position at Maribyrnong to do gauge measurement after completing her degree. Then she joined the newly-equipped Engineering School at Melbourne University and monitored mechanical engineering experiments for industry, producing her first booklet: a manual on how to use a micrometre. They married before the end of the war, in 1944, and took over a half house in Canterbury in which Mary's parents had lived after her family retired from work in India.

After the 1939 death of their mother, John and his brother Donald Macdonald made use of the Bailey Road house in Mt Evelyn as a holiday house. On visits they would climb Mt Dandenong, visit Silvan Dam and go for walks. There was no electricity in this house and no 'proper toilet', just a can collected by Andy Renouf the Nightman. The only way of heating water was the wood stove or the outside copper. 'Every drop of water for a bath' had to be carried from the kitchen or up a set of steps at the back door from the laundry, supplied by a tank.

After 1945 when the war ended, the Government was able to coerce people to rent out unoccupied



John and Mary Macdonald, wedding photo September 1944.

houses. John and Mary gave up the Canterbury house, which they had shared with first daughter Isabel, and moved to the Bailey Road house in 1946. For Mary, 'up to that time in my life I had spent my whole life moving from place to place. This was my first experience of a really permanent home, one that really belonged to us. Before that it was always rented half houses, living with other people.'

The Macdonalds reared a family of five more children (Katharine, Alister, Malcolm, and twins Douglas and Colin) in this house until 1957.

Major worries for the family were the shortage of water and proximity of snakes. They had a jungle-like backyard including a swing on a wild cherry tree, wild pea flowers and nodding greenhood orchids. Robins built their nests by picking off the wool from the children's vests and singlets hanging on the line. Bellbirds were around and parrots would flock down from the high hills when the weather became cold. One time Mrs Macdonald 'was pushing the pram and I pushed it over a snake and the snake got caught up in the wheels of the pram ... I got a tomahawk and killed the snake.'

During this period the family rarely went out to social functions. An economic decision not to own a car left them reliant on walking and public transport.

Janice Newton

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soil, car bodies, household items, refrigerators etc were dumped in the channel as fill.

In May 1979 David Edwards met Alan Carter, then principal of CE Carter Real Estate in Ringwood. He had been valuing land in Mount Evelyn for the Board of Works. The Board intended to offer it for purchase by adjoining owners. A petition to stop the immediate sale was hastily prepared and taken on to the street in Mt Evelyn. Jan Simmons and David gathered signatures. David and Jean Edwards presented the petition to a Commissioner of the Board of Works, a very young Jana Wendt reporting the event.

After this, MEEPPA began a campaign of door-knocking, letters to the editor, attendance at Council meetings etc. Anne Latreille came out and walked the bushland section, then wrote a piece in *The Age*. A second petition of 61 foolscap pages was presented to the Parliament of Victoria later in 1979.

In March 1980 the Shire advertised 'Recommendations for Future Usage' [of the Aqueduct land] 'on the basis of Council's understanding of the problems which may be encountered by ... owners of property abutting the pipeline land if the entire tract was to be made open to the public. ... for this reason, it is recommended that sections of the land in question be not acquired by the Shire of Lillydale but be offered for sale by the Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works to the owners of adjoining large allotments.'

When door-knocked, 359 people joined the 'Friends of the Aqueduct Park'; 80% of those living within 10 minutes walk of the proposed linear park signed up. Vin Mishkinis and Manson McAlpine were active MEEPPA members in the campaign, as were Neil Pope (vice-president) and Jenny Pope (secretary).

During Easter 1980, many people were keen to walk the 'unknown' bushland section of the Aqueduct – between Priestley Crescent and Hunter Road. These included Len Cox and other members of Montrose Environment Group, Betty Marsden from the Save the Dandenongs League and later Sandra Bardwell who wrote for *The Age*. At the 1982 State election both candidates – Bill Borthwick and Neil Pope (then a Lillydale Councillor) – supported the retention of the whole of the Aqueduct land in public ownership.

Bill Borthwick, the Liberal Minister for Lands, saw the aqueduct land as part of his vision of a green band of parkland around Mt Dandenong. Evan Walker, the incoming Minister, visited the Aqueduct after announcing his Conservation

policy at the Montrose Public Hall. After the election, he arranged meetings with the Board of Works. But, although there was support from both major parties at the 1982 election, Council did not agree that the continuous land should be retained.

The Amendment to the Planning Scheme rezoning the Aqueduct Land to Existing Public Open Space (Reserve) – Nature, came into operation on 29 December 1983. It took another 5 years before Council finalised the payment – \$80,000, down from the asking price of \$225,000.

The Friends of Mt Evelyn Aqueduct was officially formed in 1991. The original concrete channel only remains between Priestley Crescent and Hunter Road. Many people, including Council planners, believed that the channel was heritage listed. However the 'Mount Evelyn Water Supply System' (HO255) covers only the Water Race.

The most botanically and biologically significant part of the Aqueduct Reserve forms part of a continuous area of natural vegetation stretching from the rear of the properties on Monbulk Road to the boundaries of properties in Kalorama. The north-facing slope (Mt Evelyn Forest) with its suite of flowering native plants was the origin of MEEPPA's plant book *The Original Garden*. The deep valley of the Olinda Creek divides this slope from the Aqueduct Reserve. Its unique aspect and topography result in plants occurring there which are not found elsewhere locally. Trees burned in the 1962 fires have hollows used by wildlife. Ground-dwelling mammals are also prolific. The reserve is identified in the Planning Scheme with an over-lay for Environmental Significance.

In 2011 two tracks were constructed through this bushland by mountain bikers, without consultation with Council who manage the land. These tracks had the potential to introduce weeds, cause erosion, damage the vegetation and disturb wildlife, especially when used at night. Council closed the tracks, which were allegedly to gain access to mountain bike tracks at Silvan. Part of the area between Silvan Dam and Hunter Road, acquired by Parks Vic from Melbourne Water, has informal bike tracks claimed to be 25 years old. The site will be undergoing Cultural, Heritage and Environmental assessment. 'Guidelines for the establishment of MTB trails on public land' have been developed by Parks Vic and will be applied to the Silvan site.

Currently Council is asking the Yarra Valley Mountain Bikers and the Friends of Mt Evelyn Aqueduct, along with MEEPPA, to examine and discuss a new alternative track along the fence line of the private properties. **Jean Edwards**

Unveiling the Avenue of Honour

Rain and cold winds did not deter a sizeable turnout of community members and visitors from attending the unveiling of the recreated Avenue of Honour on Sunday 26 July.

The original Avenue was planted in 1918 in honour of men from the district who served in WWI. It has been a sore point for the community that the Avenue was cut down in the 1980s.

As part of the centenary of WWI, the History Group applied for Federal funding to re-create the Avenue. A committee of representatives from the RSL, the History Group and MEEPPA decided on a plaque telling the story of the original Avenue, with an individual plaque for each soldier. RSL President Roger Boness and Ted Fairweather created the concrete plinths. MEEPPA contributed \$500 in top-up funding.

At the ceremony, historian Bart Ziino, himself a Mt Evelyn boy, spoke movingly about what war memorials meant to the bereaved families. Bart then unveiled the large plaque. A combined choir from local primary schools performed a beautiful song, 'The Last ANZAC'.

We were proud to have descendants of the Aicher, Smith, Tucknott and Varty families to unveil their ancestors' plaques. Anne Turner wrote afterwards, 'It was wonderful to be a part of yesterday's celebrations and pay tribute to my Pa Varty. He was a genuinely lovely, gentle man.'

The catafalque party from the 22nd Engineer Regiment, East ringwood, stood guard in the cold throughout the ceremony. Kim Fawkes, a picturesque figure in WWI uniform, unexpectedly found a comrade in arms, Private George Joy. Kim wrote to Anthony McAleer,

'It was very coincidental was it not, for me to stand beside the only soldier who was in the 24th Battalion. Better still, I was wearing a 24th Battalion uniform. ... When I arrived at the Avenue of Honour I thought 'I wonder if there is a 24th man here?' I did not have time to look at the plaques before they were covered so when you told me to find a spare one, I stood in front of the one closest to me. Imagine my joy (that is his name) to find it was a 24th Battalion soldier. What are the odds of that happening?'

At the RSL Hall afterwards, Tony Smith MP and Cr Maria McCarthy unveiled Annette McAleer's portrait of WWII pilot Ralph Proctor.

Thank you and well done to everyone who contributed to make this such a memorable day.



Photos from top: community members assembled at the RSL Memorial Garden, piper Iain Townsley at the flag pole; the catafalque party; Dr Bart Ziino unveils the main plaque; the Proctor family gathers around Ralph's portrait with artist Annette McAleer at front left. Photos Kevin Philips.

Munitions workers in World War I

In the last edition of *Things Past* in the article on the Tegarts of Mt Evelyn and Montrose, Karen Phillips pondered, given the age of John Tegart and his occupation, what war work did he do in England? Well the answer was that he was a munitions worker. And his official Munitions Worker Number is 937.¹

Following the shell barrages on the Western Front of 1916, there were deficiencies in munitions production and, as skilled workers were being recruited for fighting, new workers were required. The introduction of conscription in Great Britain added to the depletion of skilled labour.

About 5000 Australians were recruited to work in Great Britain in munitions factories, under the Australian Munitions Workers Scheme, with John Tegart being one of them.

Under this scheme the volunteers would receive free passage to Great Britain, an allowance for travel time, a special allowance for the duration of the service, and eventual repatriation to Australia. John Tegart, as a married man, also received a separation allowance. Married men were required to allot a portion of all their earnings to dependants.² In return for the above, the men were expected to work in whatever industries they were directed to by the British Board of Trade, under the existing conditions and wages, for the duration of hostilities.

Australian Government newspaper advertisements appeared in August 1916 and the first party departed Australia in September 1916. Groups continued to be recruited and sent at intervals.

On obtaining a dossier from the National Archives of a person who was a munition worker, there is a wealth of information.

My relative Charles McArtney was Munition Worker 1533 and he was a wood worker, with experience in 'grinding, setting and repairing machinery'. He was aged 41 from Largs Bay in Adelaide when he signed his application in January 1917. His application accepted and agreement signed, references checked and with a clean bill of health from a doctor, he departed Sydney in July 1917, later to arrive back to South Australia July 1919, after 2 years away. During his time in Great Britain he worked as a wood machinist with Harris and Sheldon, Birmingham.

No further details are given, so it may be that all was satisfactory with Charles McArtney's life in Great Britain and he had no cause to contact the authorities. I first became aware of this scheme when obtaining the Attestation papers for Charles's son Frederick. On his application,

Frederick's mother noted that Charles was in Great Britain as a munition worker.³

John Tegart, like Charles McArtney, would have seen the government advertisements⁴ and a spark would have been lit. Like

their sons, would they have seen this as an opportunity to 'do their bit', to be close to their sons and close to the action of war? Perhaps this also offered them the opportunity to have an adventure while in their middle years, all paid for by the Australian Government. **Kathy Smalley**

Family & Local History Librarian, ERL

¹ National Archives of Australia, John Tegart: <http://recordsearch.naa.gov.au/> Basic Search dates 1914-1920.

² National Archives of Australia, Fact Sheet, Munitions Workers WW1: <http://www.naa.gov.au/collection/fact-sheets/fs136.aspx>

³ National Archives of Australia, Charles McArtney.

⁴ TROVE: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/159427530> For further reading on Australian Munitions Workers, see Griffiths, T. 2010, *An Industrial Invasion*, 1st ed., Toptech Engineering, Terry Hills NSW. See AWM website for photos. Contact kathy.smalley@erl.vic.gov.au for further information.

From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for July 2015 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and the Melbourne average.

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
116.3mm	136.0mm	58.0mm	47.5mm

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

Contact us **Kevin Phillips**

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

Editor: Karen Phillips
karen.m.l.phillips@gmail.com

President: Paula Herlihy
herlihy@alphalink.com.au or
telephone 9736 2935 and leave message

Memberships & newsletter distribution:
Kevin Phillips, kev.phillips@bigpond.com

General enquiries:
mtevelynhistorygroup@gmail.com

Postal address: Mount Evelyn History Group Inc.,
PO Box 289, Mt Evelyn, VIC 3796, Australia.

Website: www.mt-evelyn.net/historygroup

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BRITISH MILITARY BADGES

Above, WWI munitions badge

