

Things Past

Newsletter 101

July 2016

Mount Evelyn History Group Inc

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Dates for your diary

Happy Hermits display, Yarra Ranges Regional Museum, to 7 August.

'Kitchenalia': display and talk by Fabienne Harris-Smith, Saturday 9 July, 1.30pm Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn.

'Lone Pine': Marion Stott will speak on the three types of Lone Pine/Anzac trees planted in Victoria. Saturday 7 August, 1.30pm at Hardy House. 6 August is the anniversary of the Battle of Lone Pine.

AGM followed by general meeting, Monday 15 August, 7.30pm at Hardy House.

Tracks to Harmony Vale

The Olinda Creek Basin (between Olinda and Silvan) was the earliest part of the Northern Dandenongs to be settled and farmed. Jeeves, Child, Hand and Richardson selected blocks there from 1862 on. Richardson's property was called 'Harmony Vale' and the name was often applied to the settlement as a whole.

Tracks led up to Harmony Vale from our side of the mountain. In 1874 'A Tourist' wrote to *The Age*, accusing the selectors of fencing off the tracks.¹ Thomas Hand replied that a) he had *not* closed off the tracks, b) he had every right to close the tracks and c) it was a non-issue anyway, as the tracks in question were not those generally used to reach Harmony Vale.

*I can prove that said tracks are not necessary as an approach to Harmony Vale— which, by the way, refers only to Mr. Richardson's property— as a better and shorter track can be got by crossing the saw mill property (private), and following the old dray track over the Stony Rises to Mr. Richardson's 19th selection, thence by said selection to Harmony, thus avoiding an extra rise of about 206 feet.*²

The 'old dray track' as marked on John Hardy's survey map corresponded to Olinda Creek Road, running from Monbulk Road Silvan and continuing across the range to connect with Mt Dandenong Road. The saw mill referred to above was probably the one on the site of Silvan Reservoir.

The Olinda Creek saw mill at Mt Evelyn Reserve site was mentioned in an article about one of Jeeves' selections supporting 'A Tourist's' claims about the tracks.



Above, a farm at Harmony Vale, even today an isolated pocket of farmland surrounded by forest.

*The nearest way from Lillydale to the Dandenong State forest is by the Olinda saw mill, and thence by the old tramway over the range to the Harmony Vale settlements along the edge of the State forest; and this, always used by the settlers and by tourists, saved a distance of four miles; but Mr. Whitelaw permitted it to be closed by Messrs. Hand and Child's selection, the latter of which is already fenced across the track, and now, by his action on behalf of Mr. Jeeves, the track to which attention was called, and which is the only accessible road to the top of the mountain, is being similarly dealt with to the injury of the entire district.*³

It seems that the track described here was one that led directly up the mountain from the Olinda Creek saw mill at the Reserve site, most likely the Wilkilla Track and the eastern end of Inverness Road. This would have led travellers

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to the boundary of Hand's selection, where the alleged fence might have impeded further progress.

The tracks up the mountain, if they were closed off, were later reopened. A newspaper article from 1886 describes an expedition from Lilydale to Harmony Vale. The route followed Old Gippsland, Old Hereford, Hereford and Monbulk Roads, then probably the Wilkilla Track and the present Inverness Road (the route of the timber tramway in the mid-1850s).

A little over a mile [from Lilydale] we take the road to the right and pass through a well wooded and little settled country, where a loamy soil lay upon a yellow clay subsoil, baking hard in the sun.

Woodcutting was the principal industry, farming being considered a by-work to be taken up earnestly when the wood is cut out or ceases to pay. The road winds about perversely. After 8 miles along its very much cut up surface we come to Wandin Yallock, the property of Mr. McKillop, the first of the raspberry growers met with. His selection is heavily timbered and costs £12 to £15 an acre to clear properly and plough. Complaint is made of the low prices obtainable for raspberries, the chief crop relied on, which, added to the long and rough road, the price of labor and the cost of production, are not considered to repay the grower ...

Not finding Mr. McKillop at home, we proceeded to Harmony Vale, 4 miles distant, crossing the "Red Hills", so called from the reddish brown color of the ground, which imparts a deep chrome tint to surface-lying water. In common with the rest of the neighborhood, timber does well upon it, and two saw mills are at work in the State forest adjoining.



Wilkilla Track, route of a 1850s timber tramway to the Olinda Creek saw mills and one of the tracks to Harmony Vale. Photos Kevin Phillips.

Down the tramway to the right, leading to these mills, we turn through heavy growths of bluegum and stringy bark that supply the mills. The selectors in the district have no love for the saw mills. The traffic from them cuts up the roads, to the maintenance of which they contribute nothing ... The first of the mills is driven by the waters of the upper Olinda, crossing which and keeping up its right bank brings us to Harmony Vale, one of the chief small fruit growing districts in the colony, and the first farm with which we met was that of Mr. Matthew Child, called by him Mount Pleasant.⁴

The article then describes the farms and crop varieties in detail. It is worth reading in full.

Notes

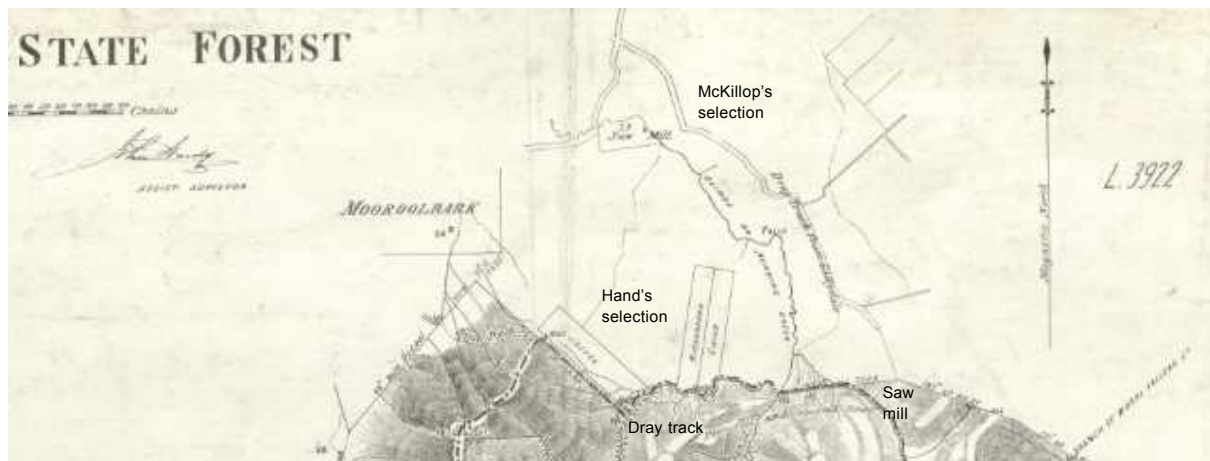
Karen Phillips

¹ 'Bush Tracks', *The Age* 5/12/1874 <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/201531144>

² 'The tracks in the Dandenong state forest', *The Age* 19.12/1874, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/201535872>

³ 'News of the day', *The Age* 28/11/1874, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/201532741>

⁴ 'The Olinda Fruit Farms', *Leader* 25/12/1886, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/198037754>



Above, part of John Hardy's survey of the Dandenong State Forest with original Harmony Vale selections (State Library Victoria). The old dray track from Silvan to Montrose appears as a dotted line south of Olinda Creek.

'Real' Australian coins

Part 1

Tim Herlihy recalls happy days collecting Australian pennies and halfpennies, coins he refers to as 'real coins'. Perhaps it was the lure of finding something valuable for nothing or, at worst, face value, a bit like finding a treasure on someone's hard rubbish.

As a young boy at High School, he managed to get together five pounds (a lot of money in those days). He and neighbour Grant Doak would take public transport to Melbourne suburban banks they hadn't been to before, or had proved productive in the past, and each would get five pounds worth of pennies or halfpennies. They would then find a quiet spot to sort through for valuable coins. They didn't collect silver coins because they couldn't afford to replace them. Ritmeester cigar tins were just the right size for storing halfpennies.

There was then far more scope for this type of coin collecting. In those bygone days, there were multiple real bank branches in almost every suburb in Melbourne. Typically, they were the State Savings Bank of Victoria, the Bank of New South Wales, Australia & New Zealand, English, Scottish & Australian, Commercial Banking Corporation, the Commonwealth Savings Bank and the Commercial Bank of Australia (CBA).

The boys were castigated by irate bank tellers because returning a five pound bag of pennies or halfpennies required the teller to carefully weigh each of the twenty five-shilling bags on equal arm balance scales (no digital scales in those days).

Most transport was by train, funded sometimes by a student concession ticket between Mt Waverley and Kooyong Stations, but more often by 'running on to the platform at the last minute' (sometimes a taxing task with one or two bags of pennies or halfpennies in hand), boarding the train, alighting at the destination station, and offering to purchase a threepenny half single ticket from whatever was the next station back from where they had alighted, paid in halfpennies. This usually resulted in, 'Oh, go away'. But once, at Flinders Street Station, they were bailed up by railway inspectors. Grant took off (he was a long distance runner), leaving Tim to face the music for both of them. Somehow Tim became responsible for Grant's behaviour in the eyes of authority: an early lesson in the unjust use of power.

The boys were taken up by police twice. One time was in Flinders Street near Russell Street,

where they were sitting on a seat on the footpath sorting their coins, and they were taken to Russell Street headquarters. 'We were clearly major criminals, but so dumb we would count our spoils in public!' Fortunately the bank tellers verified that they had paid for the loot! On the second occasion Grant and Tim were walking down Forster Road in Mt Waverley on their way home, each carrying bags of – gold ingots? doubloons? – and were apprehended by presumably bored police who drove past.

When they had accumulated a bit more money, and could afford to buy TWO hessian sacks of coppers to take home and sort through at leisure, to avoid paying for the train fare they would jump off the end of the platform at Mt Waverley before the train departed and scale the clay cliffs up to the footpath. No mean feat carrying two five pound bags of coppers up wet clay cliffs while being tooted by the train driver (an early equivalent of bungee jumping in terms of adrenalin production).

The boys travelled to the ends of all the metropolitan railway lines as they were in the early 1960s, and stopped at every station which had banks within walking distance. When travelling to the City for his orthodontist appointment, Tim would make a point of calling in at the CBA branch and buying or exchanging bags of coppers. More than one 1923 halfpenny came from that bank. East Bentleigh was a particularly good source of these coins.

Youthful eyesight was invaluable in being able to see the fine detail of coin varieties, cracked dies and other faults. On some occasions Tim recognised a 1923 halfpenny from its obverse with its die cracks before turning it over to see the date on the reverse.

In those early days of Australian coin collecting there was a pamphlet coin catalogue published by a Mr Kingston. Grant and Tim wrote him a letter, sharing some information about interesting coin varieties and the fact that they had each collected more than twenty of the rare 1923 halfpennies. Mr Kingston wrote back, saying that he didn't believe them because he had a veritable army of tame bank tellers collecting coins on his behalf from their banks, and he did not have that many 1923 halfpennies himself, therefore they were obviously lying! He had just acquired feet of clay.

Tim sold his 1923 halfpennies to finance his first guitar and amplifier when he was invited to join a rock band. He estimates that, if he still

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Happy Hermits at YRRM

Yarra Ranges Regional Museum currently has a display featuring Mt Evelyn's 'Happy Hermits'. As well as our photos, the display includes early 1900s items from the Museum's collection. Visitors can also read the 'Dairy of a Trip to Evelyn' on iPad. Thanks to Lynette Nilaweera for setting up the display.



Above, Happy Hermits display at YRRM.

Blamire Young's sketchbook

Local artist Blamire Young's sketchbook can be viewed at the National Gallery Victoria as part of the exhibition 'Luminous: Australian Watercolours 1900-2000'. The sketchbook has been digitised so that you can 'flick through' the pages. The exhibition runs until 21 August.

Lion Seat

The project to duplicate Mt Evelyn's Lion Seat has hit a snag. The lion that was to be used to make the mould proved to be too worn and the mould didn't work.

The good news is that similar seats have been found in Mildura (we are still investigating whether they are winged lionesses like ours or some other beast). It may be possible to borrow one of them to make the mould. The Lion Seat Sub-committee will continue to explore the options. The History Group's main priority now is to see our original seat installed in some suitable place in the town.

Coin collecting, from p.3

had his more than twenty 1923 halfpennies, they would be worth around \$100,000 today. One of his earliest sales to a coin dealer was of five 1942 halfpennies with large denticles (beads) on the rim. He sold them for £2 each and became the proud possessor of his first ever £10 note. It was pink and he couldn't help admiring it all the way home from the city to Mt Waverley. He was not mugged! One time he sold a hundred 1944 halfpennies, a moderately rare date, sufficient to fund the purchase of some cricket batting gloves.

Tim looks back with fondness on those days of exploration, discovery, risk, and his first lucrative hobby.

Paula Herlihy

'Dandenongs' author honoured

Helen Coulson, the author of *Story of the Dandenongs* (first published 1959), received a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to the community of Echuca-Moama. Helen has also written extensively on the history of Echuca.

From Kev's rain gauge

Rainfall for June 2016 for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, Melbourne and the Melbourne average.

Mt Ev	McK	Melb	Melb Av
110.9mm	128.15mm	54.4mm	49.5mm

Year to date.

Mt E YTD	McK YTD	Melb YTD
447.4mm	453.25mm	252.2mm

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

Kevin Phillips

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