



Things Past

Newsletter 133

May 2024

Wurundjeri Country

PO Box 289 Mt Evelyn Vic 3796

Incorporation Number A0051327F

Dates for Your Diary

Excursion, Sunday 19 May, 1:00 pm at Ambleside Park Homestead, 3 Olivebank Road Ferntree Gully. Entry fee is \$5 per person. Please RSVP to Paula on pherlihy3@gmail.com or 9736 2935 by 16 May.

General Business Meeting, Monday 17 June, 7:30 pm, at Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn.

Conference, Saturday 29 June. Association of Eastern Historical Societies, Lilydale Lakeside Campus, 1 Jarlo Drive, Lilydale. Tickets will be finalised for members at our May meeting. More information will be sent by email.

Activity, Saturday 20 July, 1:00 pm, at 61 Castella Sreet, Lilydale. Visit the Italian Cultural Group's Exhibition at the Lilydale Courthouse (L&DHS premises). Maria McCarthy will speak to us about Italian heritage in the Yarra Vally, the Italian Cultural Group and the Exhibition.

General Business Meeting, Monday 15 August, 7:30 pm, at Hardy House, 49 Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn.

Meetings are 3rd Mondays of even months, 7:30 pm at Hardy House for General Business Meetings, and speaker and activity times are on alternate months at times by arrangement - please check your email inbox.

Old Red Basalt

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Monbulk Road Mt Evelyn cuts through a hilltop that might have been an Older Volcanics crater.

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Old Red Basalt

In the Oligocene Era, 33.9 to 23 million years ago and more than 300 million years after the eruption of Mt Dandenong, another round of volcanic activity occurred in Victoria. The volcanoes of this era are known (rather confusingly) as the Older Volcanics.

The main area of Older Volcanics around the Dandenongs is at Silvan. The lava field extends about 5 km west to east taking in parts of Wandin, Mt Evelyn and Monbulk. Lewis Hill at Silvan is one likely source for the lava; another is the unnamed hill on Monbulk Road, Mt Evelyn, opposite The Wridgeway. There are, in addition, about twenty small isolated volcanic deposits as far north-east as Seville and as far south as Emerald. Another was located north-west of the range, between Mooroolbark and Lilydale.

The lava produced by the Older Volcanics was mainly basalt. This most commonly occurring volcanic rock is often blue-black ('bluestone') but can weather to brown or red. The basalt around the Dandenongs is a bright orangey-red and is the source of the fertile red soils of Wandin, McKillop, Silvan, Monbulk and Mooroolbark. 'I remember Mum saying you could put your hand down in the soil up to your elbow quite easily, the soil was so beautiful'.¹

The basalt shows up on the Geological Survey map as a series of orange splodges, each with a hilltop which probably had a moment of glory as a volcano.² Under every splodge, a lost landscape of creeks, gullies and forests lies buried. 'At Cave Hill [the basalt] occupies an old river channel, whose sands lie between it and the limestone. Here it is limited by the quartzites, which evidently formed the eastern boundary of this channel.'³

Some local springs may originate in creeks buried by the basalt lava. John Koolmees had a spring and an old creek bed on his land at McKillop, Mt Evelyn.

That flat right up to Hunter Road was all beautiful, fertile land. ... On the flat, that must have been an old creek running through there, when you ploughed it, it was just like a dark blue, and it turned hard, very hard. Everyone said when you planted it, nothing would grow in it, but it grew some of the best stuff there was. Oh extremely heavy soil: black clay it was. ...

That seep [soak] that was up on the hill ... halfway down the slope of the hill. ... there was somewhere a seep hole and a rock outcrop and the water was coming up all the time.⁴

Near Hunter Road, the basalt blocked the old valley of Stringybark Creek, diverting its headwaters into the Olinda.⁵

Ancient trees were dug up under the Older Volcanics basalt in a mineshaft at Parson Jack's Gully, Monbulk, in 1906.

The geological character of the place is noteworthy. At a depth of 25 feet the wash lies upon a great [belt] of "blackleather" containing huge pine trees buried thousands of years ago.

The "black leather", really metamorphosed timber and vegetation, is almost in the state of brown coal and burns when dry. The first 25 feet consists of the red [layer] of the older basalt lying upon 28 feet of [?] and the wash of an old stream bed.⁶

Winzenried argues that the celery-top pine *Phyllocladus aspleniifolius* (now confined almost entirely to Tasmania) dominated the vegetation of The Dandenongs until 1,000 years ago.⁷

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¹ Jill Koolmees, interview 1995.

² Geological Survey Map 'Ringwood' 1981:
<http://earthresources.efirst.com.au/product.asp?piD=384&clD=33>

³ Morris 1914, 'On the Geology and Petrology of the District between Lilydale and Mount Dandenong', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria* 26 (N.S.) Pt 2II, ART XXII, p.360,
<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/8511398#page/410/mode/1up>

⁴ John Koolmees, interviewed by Jill Koolmees, January 1995.

⁵ A.B. Edwards 1939, 'A Note on the Physiography of the Woori Yallock Basin', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria*, p.341,

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/302380>

⁶ 'Monbulk', *Lilydale Express* 20/4/1906, p.2,
<https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/258346394>

⁷ A. Winzenried 1993 (citing botanist D.M. Churchill), 'Land Settlement and Environment in the Upper Dandenongs', unpublished PhD thesis, History, Monash University, p.31.

Joyce Evans (1922-95) – Kindergarten Teacher and Daughter of ‘Pop’ Adams (1894-1990)⁸ part 2

Continued from *Things Past* #132

The Bus Service

In 1947 some people joined a deputation to Pop Adams to get transport, so he started a bus company to service Lilydale/Silvan/Montrose [and Mt Evelyn]. The buses met every train. When Joyce married Jim, her husband worked for his father-in-law, starting work at 4:45 am and going through until the last train. Later they also took on the school and paper runs.

The passengers of the Green Silver Bus line started their own social club.

This new bus service was not welcomed by two other companies providing bus services (Burchalls and Olivers) and there were public hearings about the demonstrated need for the new service. On one occasion there was a court case when a competitor bus attempted to cut off Pop Adams and his bus after he had overtaken them in Lilydale.⁹

Closing down

The ‘Do Drop In’ closed in 1955 when there was competition from the new supermarket, Nancarrows, in Lilydale. In 1979 the passenger bus line was sold but the school bus run was kept for some time. Ultimately the property was sold to the owners of ‘Chateau Wyuna’.

The corner block with its large timber hall and associated buildings lay empty and somewhat decrepit for some years. After the Governor General ‘sacked’ Prime Minister Gough Whitlam on 11 November 1975, someone wrote the words ‘Weep Australia’ [sic] in very large capital letters on the building. On 4 May 1980 ‘Do Drop In’ burned down.

Meanwhile Joyce, with the help of an older generation of women, had begun a career at the Mt Evelyn Kindergarten.



Gene Stroud (left) and Joyce Evans standing behind Bron and Caren Clarke, Clare Bond and Kim Hickey, Christmas 1966. Photo courtesy Yarra Ranges Regional Museum. Registration No. 13339.

Mt Evelyn Memorial Kindergarten

After the war, in 1945, Mrs Pitt and her builder husband George, although childless, decided that Mt Evelyn did not need another avenue of trees to commemorate a war but did need a kindergarten. They were great community workers. A committee was chosen and Mrs Adams became President (she had worked 13 years as a school teacher before her marriage). Miss Daniel was chosen as an accountant. They were both middle aged. They felt that it was best that the middle aged got the kinder going for the young who were just returning from war and adapting to new families. Most had no transport.

The kindergarten began in the Church of England Vestry, then moved to a little unlined band hall which also held the equipment for the fire brigade. There were fire helmets there and when the fire bell went off the doors burst open and men rushed in to grab equipment. The kids loved it. The band hall was next to the railway line in Birmingham Road and the steam trains choofed up the hill and blew the whistle for the kids. If there was a parcel it was a different whistle and the drivers threw out pencils, rulers, liquorice.

⁸ Information for this article is derived for the main part from a cassette tape made by Mt Evelyn Secondary College students in 1991, held by Lilydale Historical Museum.

Notes were made in the 1990s by J Newton, augmented by phone call 10 July 1993.

⁹ *Lilydale Express* 25 July 1947, 1; 6 Oct 1950, 4.



Image recreated by Sun News Pictorial of children waiting for Queen in 1954. Joyce Evans is behind boy with striped top. Martin Peirson-Jones with bib overalls is fifth from left. Photo courtesy Yarra Ranges Regional Museum. Registration No 13340.

When the steam trains 'which have a personality' were replaced by diesel it was like the train was 'snooty as anything, nose up in the air ... no whistle ... no personality!'



Children and staff of Mt Evelyn Memorial Kindergarten posing with Australian Flag and Union Jacks. c1948-53. Possibly Gene Stroud third woman from left and Mrs Olive Adams 5th woman from left. Photo courtesy Yarra Ranges Regional Museum. Registration No 11650 J Evans photo.

'The kindergarten had problems getting teachers to come to the country. They had an English lady who was good but she returned to England.' In 1953 Joyce's mother offered to mind her two young children so Joyce could do a six-month course. In 1955 Joyce became the teacher but retired in 1959 when she had her third child, Fiona (possibly working until two days before she was born).

By the late 1950s there was emergency need again for kindergarten staff because of the baby boom. There was a course to upgrade pre-school

play leaders. Joyce was chosen to do a special Diploma at night school for two years. After this she returned to the Mt Evelyn kindergarten, working there until 1973.



J Evans 1965 Pre-School Centre, Director Joyce Evans. Photo courtesy Yarra Ranges Regional Museum. Registration No. 13337.

Joyce was an active member of the advisory staff for Early Education at the Council between the 1950s and 1980. In 2021 she was honoured by

the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum at a 'Trailblazer Women Exhibition'. (See *Things Past* #121).



Official Opening of Fernhill Preschool Centre 30 April 1977. (Opened by G Hardy.) President of the Committee of Management Mr T Simmons speaking with Mrs Joyce Evans, Shire of Lillydale Photo albums, Album 7. Photo courtesy Yarra Ranges Regional Museum .Registration No. 13457.

The family of Pop Adams was known widely in the 1940s to 1970s as a result of the picnics, dances and Bus Company from the Do Drop In. Thanks largely to his wife, Olive Adams, and Mrs George Pitt, daughter Joyce Evans made her very significant mark through her work in the Mt Evelyn Memorial Kindergarten and beyond, at the Lillydale Council.

Janice Newton

Hear Woiwurrung spoken on the Warby Trail

Regular users of the Warburton Rail Trail will have seen the signs installed by Yarra Ranges Council introducing Indigenous culture and language. There is an introductory video on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=X3XRi_Rtqtw



'The Stringybark Tree'. Photo Daniel Phillips.

The signs highlight the importance of language in preserving connections to country, kinship, culture and law. Each sign has a solar-powered audio feature. Press the buttons to hear the Woiwurrung language, spoken by Wurundjeri women Brooke Wandin and Mandy Nicholson.

Two of the signs are located in Mt Evelyn: 'The Stringybark Tree' and 'Birds of Mt Evelyn'. They are uphill from the Stringybark Creek bridge, where the

Graham Colling Reserve backs onto the Trail. The 'Stringybark Tree' sign features a Woiwurrung chant in traditional style, created and performed by Brooke Wandin.¹⁰

The other three signs on the Trail are: at the Woori Yallock Creek bridge, just east of the Healesville-Koo Wee Rup Road, and beside Hoddles Creek at Launching Place.



'Birds of Mt Evelyn'. Photo Kevin Phillips

Away from the trail, a sign featuring the *luk* (eel) is located beside the Yarra at the Warburton Holiday Park. Another, at the parking area between Olinda Creek and Swansea Road, deals with scar trees and the method for making a bark canoe.

There is also a sculpture, 'Bour-deet' by Aunty Kim Wandin and Chris Joy, at Poyner Reserve in Lilydale. *Bour-deet* is the Woiwurrung name for the Cumbungi or Bulrush, which was a staple food for Indigenous people and also provided fibre for making string and bags.¹¹ The sculpture is a tribute to the female ancestors and their skill in weaving.

Karen Phillips.

Finding Traditional Owners

The traditional owners have been recognised for about 75% of Victoria. New boundary variations came into effect on 1 July 2021, following a decision made by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (VHAC) in relation to Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs).

Clicking on this searchable map of Victoria at achris.vic.gov.au/weave/wca.html allows you to identify the traditional owners of a place and their representative body. You can then look up the appropriate form of acknowledgement to use for events held on their land.

Most of the Yarra Ranges LGA is located on Wurundjeri Country. The boundary between Wurundjeri and Bunurong (Boon wurrung) Countries passes through Lysterfield, Belgrave South, Menzies Creek and Emerald.

In large part, these traditional Countries were defined by natural and environmental features, significantly by water. The direction of water flow provides a clear indication of the shape of Country and reflects the cultural understanding of the Bunurong as "Salt-water people" and the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the "people of the Birrarung" (Yarra River).¹²

Karen Phillips

¹⁰ Dr Graeme Skinner & Dr Jim Wafer, Australharmony home, A checklist of Colonial era musical transcriptions of Australian Indigenous songs. University of Sydney. <https://www.sydney.edu.au/paradisec/australharmony/checklist-indigenous-music-1.php#025>

¹¹ <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Experience/The-Arts/Creative-Yarra-Ranges-Whats-on/Public-Art/Bour-deet>

¹² Knox City Council: <https://www.knox.vic.gov.au/whats-happening/news/new-traditional-owner-boundary-now-place>

Shooting at St Mark's Holiday Camp

The growing number of European migrants visiting Mt Evelyn after World War Two was reflected in picnic gatherings at the Recreation Reserve. Music, food, merry-go-rounds and so on became a weekly occurrence in the more temperate months at the 'Rec'. One interaction between a migrant visitor and St Mark's Holiday Home, not long before it was sold to the government as a national fitness camp, could have ended tragically.

On January 21st 1951, Gordon Craig, a 29-year-old physical culture instructor from Laburnum, visited St Mark's with the Opportunity Club camp. Opportunity Clubs were formed by Reverend Trainor of the Australian Church around 1943 to help impoverished youth attain physical fitness, to be morally strong and mentally alert with bodies that were 'a temple of the Holy Spirit.'¹³ The Australian Church was a breakaway from Scots' Church Melbourne formed by Reverend Strong in 1885 and dissolved in 1957.

Gordon Craig found Ioannis Ioakim 'passing through the property with a .22 calibre Browning automatic rifle'. He told Ioakim not to go shooting up the hill as there were children in the vicinity. Ioakim, a tailor from South Yarra, said he was just walking, not shooting and that his gun was not loaded. The instructor disagreed and said that it *was* loaded. To prove him wrong Ioakim pulled the trigger and accidentally shot the instructor in the leg. The instructor was treated in hospital for a bullet wound.

Ioakim, through an interpreter, explained in court that he had bought the rifle earlier in January and had used it for the first time when he went on a picnic with the Macedonian Club to Mt Evelyn. He told a Russell Street detective he only wanted to shoot rabbits (possibly to augment the sparse diet experienced by many new migrants). He thought the safety device was on. He was fined £5 with costs for carrying a firearm on a

Sunday and advised to acquaint himself with local laws.¹⁴

Less than three months later, in April 1951, St Mark's Holiday Home was sold to the Lands Department to be run as the first permanent national fitness camp in Australia.¹⁵



Sanctuary, Mt Evelyn, National Fitness Camp

One of the first acts of the National Fitness Council, nine months after the shooting incident, was to ask in October 1951 if the area could be declared a sanctuary. Although a small area and, according to the report, lacking specific flora or fauna under threat of extinction, biologist McNally agreed that such conservation was beneficial for the education of the young, so the area was gazetted by September 1952.¹⁶ In order to gazette the land as a sanctuary, the Shire Council facilitated the transfer of the land from the Commonwealth Government to the State in August 1952 and Government Gazette 80 of September 1952 formalised the new sanctuary.¹⁷

The sanctuary lasted only 18 years. In 1968 the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife decided to assess the suitability of a number of small sanctuaries. An officer visited and described the area, (the creek of which was named by the Wurundjeri for its *nguri*, wild ducks) as 'useless for wild duck' [shooting], 'containing no species which do not occur in numbers throughout the rest of the state.' After a visit to the Camp Officer, George Blockley on 27 July 1972, sanctuary number 339 was revoked.¹⁸

Janice Newton

under permissive occupancy of the Point Lonsdale army camp. This was closed in 1946. *The Argus* 17 Oct 1946, 2.

¹⁶ *Lilydale Express* 10 Oct 1952, 7.

¹⁷ PROV VPRS 12011/P0004, FAU 0588, Sanctuary, Mt Evelyn, National Fitness Camp (includes map).

¹⁸ PROV VPRS 12011/P0004, FAU 0588, Sanctuary, Mt Evelyn, National Fitness Camp.

¹³ *The Argus* 8 March 1943, 2.

¹⁴ *Lilydale Express* 16 Feb 1951, 1. In this post-war period many local migrants struggled to survive and rabbits were a valued food. Interview Aly Kroon-Tromp 1992-7.

¹⁵ *The Age* 16 October 1950, DYSR, File 50/1/7, code 34509, Box H71, 3237F051. For several years camps had been held

Victoria Florence Foote (3/4/1898 – 1/1/1989) and the 1962 fires¹⁹

In a letter to her friend, Enid, who lived on the land on the west coast of South Australia, Victoria Florence Foote describes three days of fire and fear in February 1962. Mrs Foote was one of the first female pharmacists in South Australia. She was widowed at the age of 40 when her husband Allan was killed in an horrific road accident at Gepps Cross, SA, in November 1938.²⁰ In the late 1950s Mrs Foote bought a house in Birmingham Road, Mt Evelyn. In 1958-9 she had a house designed by architect Ian J. Smith built at 26 Johns Crescent. Living alone in this house at the age of 63, she describes the residents of Johns Crescent and the actions of neighbours and police during the emergency.



Photo of 'Aghade' provided by Christine Barnes

V Florence Foote
'Aghade'
(26) Johns Crescent
Mt Evelyn
8 February 1962

Dear Enid,

You will probably be surprised hearing from me so soon. ... Those dreadful fires, which seem to be of another world now, brought letters, phone rings and visitors from almost all corners of the world. Hence my taking time off to answer ...

Just around the aqueduct is a family in a caravan whilst their house is being built. When I pass, I always have to stop and talk with these 'kids', who are so interesting in spite of living under such conditions. They came from London just before Christmas and the father has only been successful in securing a job last week. He is an excellent bricklayer. Instead of sitting down moaning, the two of them cleared a piece of land and he has the wall up about 9 feet, I suppose. In fact, I worry about them. I feel they work too hard. He is 32 with three children and another one to be born any time ...

I do not know what you have heard or read about the fires. The whole period was just fantastic.

On the Sunday, coming home from church, we could see a fire 'over The Basin way' and Mr Nankivell remarked, 'I do not like the look of that'. Strange to say I had noticed a fire in the other direction but kept silent. As the day wore on, the fire Basin way looked grim. Late afternoon, various people kept ringing me to see if I was safe. I assured them I was, as the fire was not in this direction.

About 9.30pm another ring to ask if I was OK and I assured them I was. As I hung up the receiver, I heard someone come into the drive and, as I live well off the beaten track, just thought someone had lost their way and, seeing my light, had come to enquire. To my

¹⁹ Thanks to Helen Luke for bringing the letter to the MEHG and liaising with Christine Barnes, daughter of Florence.

The letter has been re-punctuated in parts and slightly abridged.

²⁰ *The Advertiser* 1 Dec 1938, 25.

astonishment two young men, Ian Smith and his pal, who had been fighting a fire at HEATHMONT, had come to take me away. They were surprised to find I was not within alarming distance, so went away quite happy. Remember that lovely walk we had through the scrub back at Christmas? That was the scene of anxiety in Heathmont ... Another danger spot was that land I had in Heathmont ...

I went to bed Sunday night with an eye to the fire from Basin way, which was getting closer. I knew the fire would have to jump a road and a creek before reaching here, so I felt safe.

The next morning, still raging, though seemingly from the other side of the mountain. Just did odd jobs and remembered I had some important mail that must go Monday. As I was running late, I rang for a taxi to go to [the] PO a quarter mile from here. That was followed by a ring from Hampton. I said, 'Yes, OK'. As I put down the receiver and turned, my dear Enid, I just could not believe what I saw. The whole mountain was a raging inferno. Walls of flame and, as they came over the mountain this side, the whole fanned out into a fan shape over the mountain. Even now I try to recall and just cannot.

The taxi came for me - woman driver - I said, 'Look my mail is very important - drop me and I'll walk if you think you should get women & children out'

We arrived in the town and there were about 200 people assembled. I just could not look any more. The strained looks were just too terrible.

I heard the fire captain say, 'York Road and spread out'.

I walked back and when nearly home a utility came along and the driver, an Italian living further along, asked me if I was OK. I said 'Yes' and he said 'We are evacuating'.

That night I slept up in the attic where I had a better view and, between dozes, had a little sleep. On the mountain was a horseshoe-shaped fire and I remember thinking 'I do not like you.

I wish you were under control', for the remainder seemed to have subsided.

Well, within a — the horseshoe turned into a terrific blaze and raced over the ridge, taking the houses on the way.

Tuesday, the third day, I dressed early & walked a few yards to move the hose. My wonderful neighbour came along asking how I was and remarking he thought we were out of danger. I said I thought so too.

I more or less had my eye on the mountain all night. To my amazement Mr (Dick) Johnson ('Westhill', Johns Crescent) said that did not worry them. Woori Yallock was the danger spot.

Well, another shock. WY is 30 miles from here,²¹ and I had not looked east. He (DJ) just left me. I stooped to do something & when I stood up - another wall of fire and smoke from the east in those few seconds.

The wind which was terrific took the fire in the other direction towards heavily timbered country, which was absolutely tinder for such an inferno.

By now I just walked from spot to spot trying to see what next. About midday I went to the front door for something or other and once again [was] faced with flames from the North. That was when Warrandyte, Wonga Park & so on went. That was more terrifying, watching the flames come up & over four tiers of mountains. I really thought Lilydale would be the next.

Strange to say Lilydale does not seem to be mentioned and, to me, that was a dreadful area.

The birds were pathetic. They just seemed to hop from bough to bough. The sun was almost invisible.

Mr Johnson came along again. He remarked he thought my house the safest in Evelyn, being Asbestolite & clear of near timber & rubbish. I thought so too and added, 'well, if it has to go,

²¹ Actually 15.7 km.

I would rather be here to see it burn than being away with that terrible "has it?"'.

Adjacent is an aqueduct and I had decided to get into that if necessary. By now all telephones were out of action.

About 9.00pm I was sitting in the front outside, desperately tired as I practically walked all day from one position to another. Smoke was so dense one did not know what was happening behind the smoke. About 9.00 I could see flames through the trees in another direction, north east, so that meant the whole of Evelyn was surrounded.

9.15 I thought, I shall listen in. Then 9.30 a ring came through, 'Are you all right?' 'Yes, I am, thank you.' Phone cut off and then two men at the doorstep to evacuate. I said I was not leaving, I felt safe. Police orders, so I had to go. They grabbed me by the arms & helped me down my very steep drive where a car was waiting. Bundled in with cat, dog, lantern & a few bits and pieces of the poor folk.

We had to drive out of Johns Crescent [in] the other direction. On the way the driver had to stop to warn the people to get out as fast as they could.

Enid, though the three days were a nightmare, I was more shocked to find where people lived. Tin shanties, hessian huts, any bit of shelter just thrown among the standing gums & scrub. No water, no lighting: how they live I just do not know. They hadn't a hope of getting out if the fire reached them.

Eventually we arrived in Montrose, only three miles. The traffic

On arrival at Croydon the Red Cross were just wonderful. The local hall turned into a dining room and [in] other places beds [were] made & so on. We were all interviewed and particulars taken. There was plenty of room, but [we] did not know what to expect. So, we were asked if we could stay with anyone. I straight away said Bayswater or Heathmont. That was 'off'. Those places were on the danger spots and all roads blocked. I suddenly thought of some friends in Croydon, where I was taken. These

friends already had two from Warrandyte, who were in bed.

I realised I hadn't a hank [handkerchief] so borrowed one. Well, when I used that hank it was black. Ann laughed & said, 'Oh yes, would you like a hot bath?'. I gratefully accepted and said I would wash my underclothes, which would be dry by morning.

Enid ... then the miracle, RAIN, which had not been forecast!! I turned to Ann and said, 'The Answer!'. Rain continued the whole night. That afternoon, when I stood outside, I [had] realized the whole thing was beyond man and I prayed, 'Dear God, Thou knowest the answer. Use Thine Ancient Power.' When I prayed, Enid, I did not know what Power could be used. The answer was RAIN and, do you know, the papers have [been] near full of sceptics. Rain just came & that was all about it. Well, I would like to ask why RAIN in only the devastated area?

On return next day - morning really - house intact, garden intact, V F Foote missing. Poor Mr Johnson [had] searched the house and surroundings without avail. Mr J thought I might have collapsed.

After three days of heavy fire fighting against tremendous odds, I think those in authority became panicky, and no wonder. Consequently, all control was lost. There are many details I have not given you. Such would fill many pages.

Everything is so peaceful and quiet. Today raining. The blackened ruins will ever be a reminder of people's stupidity in burning rubbish on days of searing heat.

My garden has given me lettuce, tomatoes and beans since Christmas. Gardening conditions are different here. I am learning as I go along. ... We did not have winter rains, nor spring, thus creating ideal conditions for fires. ...

Love to you all.

Yours cordially
V Florence Foote

Anzac Day 2024

Showery weather did not deter the good-sized crowd that attended the Dawn Service at the Mt Evelyn Memorial Garden on ANZAC Day. The rain fortunately cleared for the ceremony.

RSL President Matthew Crymble noted that 2024 marks 25 years since the start of the Peace-keeping Operation in East Timor (Timor Leste), in which Australians served.

A particularly moving part of the service was the reading of the Mt Evelyn Roll of Honour. A bell tolled once after each name.

Ian James laid the History Group's floral tribute. We'd chosen a sheaf of natives in mainly dark red tones. Many florists are phasing out traditional wreaths, as the foam backing contains carcinogens, and ends up in landfill.



War Memorial with tributes. Ours is the red bunch on the corner. Photo Kevin Phillips.

After the New Zealand and Australian national anthems, Matthew Crymble cautioned the kookaburras that they were 'adrift' (the Navy term for being absent without leave) and would be charged. This telling-off evidently stirred them, and they piped up about a minute later, towards the close of the ceremony.

Later in the morning, a cycling club stopped at the Memorial Garden on their way to Warburton and held their own Anzac Day service, proving again what an asset the Garden is to the community. Disappointingly the site was vandalised recently, along with other war memorials in Yarra Ranges.

Mt Evelyn Station Platform

Users of the Warburton Rail Trail will have noticed the alarming lean on the wall of the reconstructed Mt Evelyn Station platform. It has been gradually tilting for several years and threatens to collapse onto the Trail.



Station platform with leaning wall and trail bottleneck at the far end. Photo Kevin Phillips.

Yarra Ranges Council intends to stabilise the structure, rebuilding the wall and cutting back the south end of the platform where it encroaches on the Trail.

The railway line used to pass through what is now Bowens yard. The present platform reflects the curved shape of the original, but the Trail has been realigned to skirt round the timber yard.

Work on the platform is expected to begin on 6 May.

Karen Phillips

Two Queries

MEHG has received mail from two people trying to find out more about their families.

Sharon Oppenheimer nee Smith wants to know more about her father, **Thomas William Smith**, who married her mother **Ethel May Martin** in a Birmingham Road church in 1959. She thought it was a Methodist church, but we think it is more likely the Presbyterian church. Victorian Presbyterian archives do not hold marriage records for the Mt Evelyn Presbyterian Church but the church in Mt Evelyn or Lilydale may hold such records.

Kathy Wright is trying to find out more about her relatives the **Gerlachs** and **Hudsons** and also the **Staines**. She would be particularly interested in

images of the stores with which they were involved. Kathy's mother had happy memories of visiting Mt Evelyn during school holidays in the 1930s and going on a truck with her Uncle Ted Gerlach to deliver groceries. He had a store opposite the railway station.

Kathy found the following note in the *Lilydale Express* 4 April 1952, 5:
According to latest reports, two well-known Mt. Evelyn businesses have changed hands. Owned by Mr. E. Gerlach the grocery shop in Railway parade has been taken over by Mr. John L. Roberts, Mr. Gerlach's other business, the store and service station at the corner of Silvan and York roads, has been sold to Mr. Stan Pierce. Messrs. Roberts and Pierce are both local identities.

Ted and Cath/y Gerlach were in Mt Evelyn from at least 1937. Cath was involved in the CWA, kindergarten and tennis club. Ted acted as an MC on some occasions and enjoyed fishing expeditions. Ted's sister, Emma, was married to Bob Hudson and later owned the newsagency 'next door' to the Gerlach's grocery store.

Things Past #121 has an article on the Hudsons and their newsagency. The history of the tennis club mentions both families in the late 1940s.

Before they married, the three sons of Bob and Emma Hudson, Roly, Wallace and Donald, lived in Mt Evelyn, so Kathy thinks they may have worked

for the Gerlachs. Roly and Wallace married sisters, Sheila and June Schulz. Their parents Bob and Emma Hudson sold their business in Rupanyup in 1956 and bought a mixed business in Mt Evelyn, which was later run by Roly and Sheila.



THE PUPILS OF SCHOOL Grades 1 - 4, 1941

Back row: 1. 2. Darrell Staines 3. Roy Thompson 4. Peter O'Connor
 5. 6. Tom O'Connell 7. Alan Matthews 8. Harry Cam 9. Harry Gill
 10. Bob Thompson.

2nd Row: 1. Reg Polkinghorne 2. Ray Benham 3. 4. Lionel Robertson
 5. Eric Lockington 6. Richard Hollis 7. Charles Dean 8. Ray Dorrington
 9. 10. 11. 12. Jack Phillips
 13.

3rd Row: 1. Florice Crisp 2. Dorothy Davies 3. Merle Davies 4. Val Pearson
 5. Sylvia Neilson 6. Laurie Pearce 7. Ivy Hughes 8. Margaret Nilsen
 9. 10. Dorothy Lockington 11. 12. Lorna McLaren
 13. Dorothy Nilsen 13. Evelyn Jackson.

4th Row: 1. Nancy Dennett, 2. 3. Dulcie Benham, 4. Mary Adeney.
 5. Joy Phillips, 6. Veronica Crisp, 7. Sylvia Rose, 8. Gloria Crisp, 9. Shirlye Polkinghorne, 10 Janice Bishop; 11 Ev. Jackson, 12. Barbara Worthington.
FRONT ROW: 1. Les Robertson 2. 3. Don Varty 4. Hayden Underwood.

5. Ron Taylor, 6. Reg Benham, 7. Colin Dean (Holding board) 8. Kevin Alexander
 9. Graeme Watkins, 10, Norm Alexander, 11. Alan Taylor 12. Ken Dodson 13. Murray Worthington

The image above shows pupils at Mt Evelyn State School in 1941 and the names of many who helped in the writing of *Tracks to Trails* or are mentioned in it. Thanks to Anne Welsh who collected this information at the time of the Mt Evelyn Primary School's 85th Anniversary.

If you can offer any photos or information to Sharon and Kathy, please email mtevelynhistorygroup@gmail.com

Old Red Basalt

from p.2

He is writing of a much later period, but the Older Volcanics might have erupted during another cold spell, when the vegetation was more 'Tasmanian' than it is now and included native pines.

The origin of the Lilydale/Mooroolbark basalt was the subject of speculation in the early 20th century. The likely source was the group of hills on either side of Maroondah Highway near Victoria Road/Mooroolbark Road. Two hills north and south of the highway had what appeared to be breached craters on their summits. According to Morris, the locals took the volcanic origin of the southern hill for granted, calling it 'Crater Hill'.²² This hill was formerly part of the property 'The Briars', Mooroolbark, and is now occupied by a housing estate.

Morris excavated to a depth of 30 feet in the crater-like formation on the north side of the highway and found basalt all the way down. He was reluctant to call the hill a volcanic vent without further investigation. This group of hills now seems to be accepted as the source of the local basalt, and therefore of the red earth of Mooroolbark.

Karen Phillips

Karen Phillips' paper on the geology of the Dandenongs is now available from the History Group website: Click [here](#) to download.

Thank you to everyone who provided information or photos. Earlier versions of some sections have previously appeared in *Things Past*.

From Kev's Rain Gauge				
Rainfall (in mm) for Mt Evelyn, McKillop, and Melbourne for the last 3 months.				
		Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24
Mt Evelyn	Mt Evelyn	14.8	8.5	166.5
McKillop	McKillop	27.0	8.4	159.4
Melbourne	Melbourne	6.0	2.8	123.8

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

Kevin Phillips

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Opinions expressed in *Things Past* are those of the writers, not necessarily those of Mount Evelyn History Group.

²² Morris 1914, p.361.