

# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

## 2009 - 2010

### CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair's report for 2008 opened with these words: "The Hotham History Project is a continually evolving organization" and went on "We started off as a group wanting to research and publish a history of our locality. Soon afterwards, we decided not to do that. Instead, we decided to research and publish thematic material and build up a collection of oral history."

It continued "Some time later, we organised the first of our walks, ironically a Pub Walk where all but two of the sites we visited were 'dry'. But it was a considerable success and we continued to include walks among our activities. Gradually other things cropped up and were added in."

Those words also sum up the state of affairs in 2009. The Project's diary for the last year shows that the diversity of events, interests and projects-in-the-making has continued.

**2008 August:** A walk recalling the life of first and second generation Irish residents of Hotham Hill in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and how their influence continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, organised in conjunction with the Public Records Office of Victoria. This walk was repeated four times during the year.

**2008 September:** An evening talk and slide show presented by Madeleine Scully about the history of the Bowls Club, now The City of Melbourne Bowls Club and established in the district 143 years ago.

**2008 October:** Participation in the Spring Fling and the production by Lorraine Siska and Allan Ashley of a DVD of early photographs of North & West Melbourne. The DVD was played in Andrew Harris shop window in Errol Street and later at the North Melbourne Library.

Special thanks to Lorraine Siska and Alan Ashley for producing the DVD, to Andrew Harris for the space and to Radio Parts who provided a monitor and DVD player for the week of the Spring Fling.

**2008 November:** An evening talk by Guy Murphy based on his study of a North Melbourne mansion. The work, *At home on Hotham Hill*, continues to attract interest. In addition, Guy maintains our website and in the last few months has established an email list that will allow us to send Hotham History Project newsletters and notices directly into your computer.

**2009 March:** A well attended illustrated evening talk by Dr Gary Presland. His recent book, *The Place for a village: how nature has shaped the city of Melbourne*, reconstructs what the Melbourne area would have looked like when first seen by Europeans. On this occasion, he related his material to our locality. He described how its local environments shape Melbourne and explained ways in which nature continued to shape Melbourne.

**2009 May:** A varied evening talk prepared by Lyndon Arnold about 330 King Street – the only existing pre-gold rush building in Melbourne that has been used continuously as a residence.

**2009 June:** Local History Forum: Lorraine Siska produced a DVD through which the work of our Project could be presented to people with similar interests from other parts of the city.

**2008 – 9:** Various editions of the North and West Melbourne News to which the Project provided articles. For example, during this year, stories of some of the local lads who enlisted in World War 1 and details of a World War 2 incident commemorated on a plaque near the Macaulay Railway station.

And we have planned:

**2009 September 5:** A walk led by Dr Winsome Roberts based on her research and understanding of the early years of North Melbourne. We will set off from the North Melbourne Library in Errol Street at 2.00pm

**2009 October 25 to November 1:** History Week, organized by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, to be supported locally by the Hotham History Project. The aim is to encourage people to explore Victoria's past. We are offering talks and activities at the local schools and on November 7, will have another thematic walk, Horses in Hotham.

During the year, we received a grant from the Royal Historical Society's History Support Group for a Roll-Up banner to identify us at our various events. Thanks especially to Mary Kehoe and Guy Murphy who looked after the application, the design and production of the banner.

We have a number of projects on the go. I want to take time to name those that have priority.

1. To make the content of the Burchett Index accessible on-line.

The Burchett index is the Index of Notices of Intent to Build new buildings and major works lodged with Melbourne City Council from 1850 to 1916. Winston Burchett compiled it in the 1980s from original documents, building registers and contemporary directories. The proposed on-line version would be an invaluable resource and we know how to do it but have not yet been able to organise members and friends to help us with it.

2. To publish a history of the Bowls Club, which is one of the oldest sporting clubs in Melbourne. We have collected a deal of valuable material and now look forward to shaping it up for publication.

3. To continue our collection of oral history, which is under the thoughtful care of Mary Kehoe.

4. To research the history of West Melbourne. As their work takes shape, Lorraine Siska and Mary Kehoe will welcome any information or particular research that you can offer.

5. To gather stories of families and family life on Hotham Hill. Rae Nicholls and myself are following families who came in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and stayed on well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We want to hear from you if you have material or suggestions about what we should follow up.

As far as the Project is concerned, when these elements are completed to the best of our ability, we will have kept faith with the people who have helped us over the years and provided information to us. During the coming year, we therefore need to think about how the activities that have grown up with us may continue. That is a major task for the coming year.

Why do we do all this? Basically it is about local identity. We know that from the 1840s on, successive groups of immigrants have made their first homes in North and West Melbourne. Each group has added its character and customs to the mix. Repeatedly the community has re-built itself. We have set out to find the history of our people and our streets but in doing so, can we also find the common values that will draw us together?

The Committee is proud of the work it has done and of the contribution of the members of the Project. Thank you to everyone for their work – especially to our secretary, Mary Kehoe and treasurer, Rae Nichols.