



HOTHAM HISTORY PROJECT Inc.

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Estab. 1995
ABN: 89 919 256 977

Hotham History News *Summer/Autumn 2011*

Dear friends and supporters of the Hotham History Project,

Welcome to another year of history related activities. We hope you all enjoyed a relaxing summer holiday break and that you and your loved ones were not adversely affected by the storms and floods which have devastated so many parts of Australia in recent years.

BURCHETT INDEX

As reported at the AGM (see previous newsletter), the Hotham History Project has been planning to make the Winston Burchett card index of notices to build in the City of Melbourne more accessible by transferring the information on North & West Melbourne onto a database. The Burchett index, which covers the period 1850-1916, contains valuable information on owners, builders and architects which is very useful in researching the history of our built heritage. Your committee has not been idle over the summer break. Under the guidance of our webmaster, Guy Murphy, who has created a database, we have already entered the information for North Melbourne. The entries for North Melbourne were not as numerous as some suburbs and it was very satisfying to achieve our goal. To insert the information for West Melbourne, however, is not so straightforward as the entries for West Melbourne are filed under Melbourne. As you can imagine, there are an extremely large number of entries for Melbourne, and in some cases it will be difficult to extract those for West Melbourne from the Melbourne entries, eg King and Spencer Streets which pass through both suburbs. .

We are therefore looking for volunteers to help with this ongoing task. The card index is at the Department of Transport Library in Exhibition Street and we have been working in pairs. We need volunteers to help with the data entry, including people who can bring windows laptop computers.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this project, please contact us at: info@hothamhistory.org.au or ring Mary Kehoe (9329 5814) or Jenny Cook (9329 9775).



Jenny Cook, Mary Kehoe, Graham McCallum, Guy Murphy and Rae Nicholls, inserting data from the Burchett Index at the Transport Department Library, 13 Jan 2011. Photo by Lorraine Siska.

SOME ACTIVITIES FOR 2011

WALK – 2.00pm Saturday 9 April. R-Rated Real Estate

Lorraine Siska will reflect on her r-rating of some of North & West Melbourne's heritage as she leads us past some of the buildings she has chosen to illustrate the changes to our built environment. Based on her book *R-Rated Real Estate Belonging to North & West Melbourne*, designed by Alan Ashley in 2004.

Meet outside the North Melbourne Library, Errol Street.

WORKSHOP – 2.00pm Saturday 21 May. How to research the history of your house using the Burchett Index and other sources

Venue: North Melbourne Library Local History Room

The numbers for this workshop will be limited so please make sure to book this in advance at info@hothamhistory.org.au.

WALK/TALK – 2.00pm Saturday 9 July

Take a tour of the buildings designed by 19th century architect George Johnson – the Metropolitan Meat Market, the North Melbourne Town Hall and the Municipal Buildings with expert commentary by Bill Hannan, author of *Pride of Hotham*.

Meet outside the North Melbourne Library, Errol Street

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 2.00pm Saturday 22 October

Guest speaker and venue to be advised.

WALK – WEST MELBOURNE CHURCHES & BELL RINGING AT ST JAMES

We are also hoping to organise a twilight walk in late Spring/early Summer to visit some of the churches in West Melbourne, finishing with bell ringing at St James Old Cathedral, Melbourne's oldest church. Further details later in the year.

FRIENDS OF THE RUSSELLS

330 King Street, Melbourne

Some of you may have attended the fascinating talk by Lyndon Arnold in May 2009, *The House that James Built*, about the 1850s shop/residence on the corner of La Trobe and King Streets. The owner, Lola Russell, whose grandfather bought the building in 1899 was at that meeting and recited a poem written by her husband, George Dixon, about the house. A group has recently been formed to try to support George and Lola to preserve their fragile little piece of history. If you would like to see a truly unique space – one of the few pre-gold rush buildings left in Victoria – why not drop in for a coffee some time and meet the Russells.

OTHER NOTICES

Descendants of First Fleeter John Nichols and his wife Ann Pugh are holding their first Victorian Family Reunion in Daylesford at the Town Hall on Sunday 2nd October and Monday morning 3rd October 2011 and have extended an invitation to all our members. There is no charge. If you are interested, please see:

<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~johnnichols/> or contact Carole Brown (02) 9451 0077

STORIES FROM OUR PAST –

Excerpt from a letter to *The Age*, 1934, one of a large number of letters recalling life in North Melbourne in the 1860s & 70s.

Sir, I was born at North Melbourne AD 1855 and have kept a diary of early Melbourne since my boyhood, I would point out to Sandy Mac and Mr Nairn that Jimmy Kerby, A.B.C., was the subnormal son of the old vegetable hawker they whistled to so as to get a chase. This unfortunate boy attended the late Mr Albert Mattingley's common school, Errol Street, near Queensberry Street; as he could not learn his alphabet he was nicknamed as above. Dr W. Maloney, M.P. was a schoolmate with me at the time.

It may be interesting to some of the ancients to mention incidents of our early days at North Melbourne. For instance, boys would gather at the lamp posts to see the lamplighter run up his night ladder, light the lamp and slide down so quickly that we thought he was wonderful....

The original North Melbourne railway station was a considerable distance north-west of the present site. The old station was removed and is

still in position as a waiting room on the west platform of the Essendon line. The old road from North Melbourne passed under the old block timber bridge to Footscray Road (now Dynon's Road). It may interest some of your readers to know that the original line to Williamstown was a single line and for probably over 600 yards was built on piles over the old swamp. These piles were not removed and if not decayed are still in position. On this line of piles there was a signal box, a cabin. Mr Dewsnap was the signalman and he resided with his family in the cabin. Mr Dewsnap had several small dinghies and in the early morning boys would smuggle them for a pole on the swamp and often to their sorrow.... Just above the present junction of the Williamstown and Essendon lines the road from Arden Street, North Melbourne diverted and went over a level crossing past Brown's Hill to the old Footscray Road. There was a brick gatekeeper's cottage and gates for vehicular traffic. The original Williamstown train was composed of a peculiar short engine with a water saddle, and painted green and gold. There was a first and second class carriage. These carriages were very small, with small windows so high that one had to get off the seat to look out. These carriages were known as dog boxes, and I think a few are still in the hands of the Railway department. There was a fine large swimming pool on the west side of the junction, and at the foot of Brown's hill a portion was roped off for the non-swimmers, and other portion very deep with a spring board. The water was always clear and clean, as there was a very strong spring. This was known as Carter's hole, and was excavated for beautiful pipe clay, which was carted to Stevenson's pottery for the manufacture of insulators for telegraph poles. The pottery was approximately on the present site of G. Stuckey and Co's Fuel Depot.

Along the banks of the River Yarra, there was a belt of ti-trees about 100 yards wide, and plenty of snakes. The West Melbourne swamp extended from the ti-tree to the North Melbourne Cricket Ground and during the wet season was alive with black and teal ducks, swan, crane, plover and snipe. The snipe kept to the Moonee Ponds Creek and gullies along the Macaulay Road, past the present railway station and the old toll-gate. It was common talk in the early days that Mr Gilmour built the Point Hotel on Footscray Road (now Dynon's Road) out of ducks, etc., obtained by swivel guns fired in his large dinghies, and fiddling at weddings and parties at night.

The City Council dumped dead cattle and rubbish on the land a little north of the North Melbourne Cricket Ground. The bodies were left to fester in the sun and were devoured by myriads of crows, who in the evening roosted in the trees at the Royal Park.

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Yours &c., CARRON II, Essendon, 30th Aug.

We are looking forward to seeing many of you at our walk in April. If you have any queries or no longer wish to receive our notices and newsletters, please send us an email at info@hothamhistory.org.au.