



HOTHAM HISTORY PROJECT Inc.

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ABN: 89 919 256 977

Hotham History News

June-July 2008

Dear friends and supporters of the Hotham History Project,

The end of the financial year is fast approaching and I am attaching a 2008-09 membership form for those who wish to renew their membership. If you paid your membership at one of our events earlier in the year, this will cover you until the end of June 2009.

Membership fees help with administration, postage, public liability insurance, organizing activities and website expenses but we also need the proceeds from the sale of our existing books to fund the research and production of future publications. So if you enjoy our events and the books we produce, please support us so that we can continue our work of recording the history of this fascinating part of Melbourne.

Our annual general meeting will be held on 6 September. We are always looking for feedback from our members and we encourage you to consider joining the committee or becoming more involved in some of our research projects. Please contact one of the committee if you would like more information or send us an email at info@hothamhistory.org.au.

Chair: Lorna Hannan (9328 3211)
Treasurer: Rae Nicholls (9816 9720)
Secretary: Mary Kehoe (9329 5814)

North Melbourne to be re-united on 1 July 2008.

We are pleased to welcome the re-unification of North Melbourne after the community was divided between the municipalities of Melbourne and Moonee Valley in the 1990s.

Talk by Gary Presland

Unfortunately this talk, originally scheduled for Saturday 7 June, was cancelled because of delays in the publication of Gary's book on the natural history of the Melbourne region. We will re-schedule this talk when Gary has confirmation of the publication date for his book.

MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2008

Hotham History Project Committee meetings and activities are held bi-monthly on the 4th Tuesday of the month at the North Melbourne Library. Committee meetings for 2008 will be on 26 August, & 28 October at 7.30pm.

Please mark the following dates on your calendar:

Talk – Tuesday 22 July at 7.30pm, North Melbourne Library

Long-term committee member, Lorraine Siska, has lived in her 1860s house in West Melbourne most of her life. She has become fascinated with learning the secrets of its past, and in particular, the story of the second owner of the house, George Donald, Inspector of General Markets, an important and highly respected figure of his time

Lorraine will talk about her voyage of discovery and provide suggestions about how you can go about researching the history of your own house.

AGM – 6 September at 2.00 pm Guest Speaker: Val Noone at 2.30pm

John Noone of West Melbourne, government lithographer 1861-88

Dr Val Noone is a fellow of the Department of History at the University of Melbourne, and a great-grandson of John Noone.

His talk will outline the life and times of John Noone (1820-1883) and Julia Reilley (1840-1902) and their children of Stanley Street and later Roden Street, West Melbourne. Particular attention will be given to John's scientific and technical work as government lithographer, 1861-88, especially in producing land maps of Victoria; Julia's life as mother; and the remarkable record of five daughters who became teachers. Some reflections are offered on changes in printing technology, the role of mapping in colonisation, the impact of the 1890s depression and the role of women in state education.

Talk – 23 September at 7.30pm

The City of Melbourne Bowls Club is one of the oldest bowling clubs in Melbourne. The Club has been researching and writing its history over the past couple of years. Come along and learn more about its rich and varied past and the latest news on its exciting new clubhouse.

Talk – 25 November at 7.30 pm

Guy Murphy, author of *At Home on Hotham Hill*, (Annals of Hotham vol 4), has returned to Melbourne

after over 3 years in London. Much of his time there was spent indexing 19th century British architectural and building journals for Australian references. When finished, this index will be a wonderful resource for researchers. Guy also visited Gravesend in Kent, birthplace of Robert Langford, the builder of the “bougainvillea house” in Dryburgh Street. Guy will talk about the writing of *At Home on Hotham Hill*.

NORTH MELBOURNE MEMORIES

Ethel Mann has lived most of her life in the house her father built in Curzon Street after the demolition of the Benevolent Asylum. We are extremely grateful that she has recorded her vivid childhood memories for the Hotham History Project. Some of her memories may spark the memories of other older residents:

The very old ex-public house (Freemasons' Hotel) on the corner of Curzon and Victoria Streets (east side) had become a sleazy rooming house when I was a small girl – 1920s. The old cobbled yard and old stables could be seen from Victoria Street.

One night loud screams woke us all up and running outside we saw a woman in her night dress and bare feet pushed out a first floor window and she was left hanging on the sill. A neighbor ran across the road and got the woman to let herself drop while he caught her to break her fall. I was horrified to see her run away down Curzon Street in bare feet. I don't know where she went because I suppose my mother hustled me back inside.

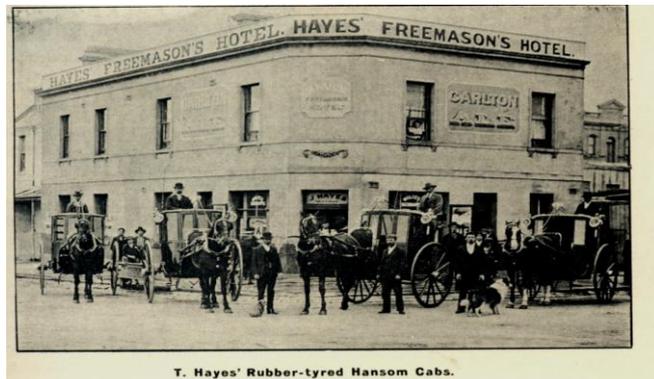
(The Freemason Hotel, since replaced by the Brown Gouge drycleaners, opened in 1860 and was situated opposite the cast iron gates of the entrance to the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum, North Melbourne's first building. According to the *North Melbourne Advertiser* of 6 November 1885:

A large number of the inmates (of the Benevolent Asylum) at present are a nuisance to the neighbourhood and by soliciting money which is too often freely given they are able to procure drink at the numerous hotels, the proprietors of which are in some instances largely kept going by the inmates.

Thomas Hayes, a proprietor of the Freemasons' Hotel around the turn of the century, was also proprietor of the Freemasons' Stables in Victoria Street which hired out buggies, hansom cabs and wagonettes. It is claimed that he was one of the first to use solid rubber tyres on his vehicles.

The Freemasons' was deprived of its license in 1904 due to a “poor record of management” and became a rooming house. Another early resident remembered it as “the red blind place” and thought it was like “a mansion of broken hearts”.

In the 1940s there was a surgical instruments' manufacturer listed in the directories at the site but Brown Gouge has been there since the mid 1950s. We still do not know when the hotel building was actually demolished, so would love to hear from anyone who has memories of its demolition or any other stories about the hotel and its subsequent uses.



Freemasons' Hotel, c. 1900s (the building on the far right is possibly the building referred to in the story below).

Ethel also remembered a fierce thunderstorm during her childhood.

It's hard to try and time this – I would hazard late 20's or early 30's. I was watching a first class thunderstorm from our front window, because I always revelled in spectacular storms and loud thunder. I loved to count in seconds between flashes and thunder in the belief that measured distance away.

One flash and deafening thunder came together and the sounds of falling bricks and things.

In my view looking across Curzon St., the red brick parapet, and I think bits of chimneys or high parts of the building in or near Errol St came down. I'm not quite able to place the back of a two storey building visible to me, which lost a part of its parapet. Maybe a building I can see looking up the lane beside the present newsagency in Errol St., (The Griffith Building, Errol Place?) or maybe the back of the newsagency building that used to be a smallish department store – I can't remember if it was Pritchard's or Shannons. Fitzgeralds, of course, was opposite.

During the strike, a “fire-ball” or flash of ball lightning came bouncing up the middle of Curzon St., going uphill towards Victoria St. I seem to remember it was bluish and about a metre or perhaps more in diameter. Examining the road later, I think I can remember patches in the tarred surface left each time it bounced on its way up hill. There was no one about, and no traffic I think, as it was a terrific storm.

There was no dividing trees or grass in the centre of the road then.

The parapet wasn't repaired for many years. This happened in the depths of the depression period.

We look forward to receiving your membership renewals. If you do not wish to receive our notices and newsletters, please ask the Secretary (mekehoe@iprimus.com.au or 9329 5814) to remove you from the mailing list

We hope to see you at the AGM or at some of the other events we have organized for the remainder of the year.