



# HOTHAM HISTORY PROJECT Inc.

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## *Hotham History News*

### *December 2008*

Dear friends and supporters of the Hotham History Project,

The year is drawing to a close and many of us are busy with end-of-year festivities. We hope you have time to read this newsletter and note the events we are preparing for your enjoyment next year.

#### **SPRING FLING 2008**

We wish to congratulate The Centre, Spring Fling co-ordinators, Kristie & Tam and all those who contributed to making the Spring Fling such a wonderful success this year.

How many of you visited our stall at the Spring Fling? More importantly, did you see the large television monitor in the window of Optometrist, Andrew Harris, at 58 Errol Street, which provided a continuous display of historic photos of North & West Melbourne during the Spring Fling and the week immediately following? We are particularly indebted to one of our members, Alan Ashley, for this fascinating display of early photographs. Alan has spent an enormous amount of time tracking down photos from a variety of sources and putting them onto a DVD. There were almost 250 photographs on the DVD and the cycle ran for approx 45 minutes. One engrossed observer even nominated it as his favourite event of the Spring Fling!

We would also like to thank local firm, Radio Parts Group, for the generous donation of the television and DVD player and Andrew Harris for providing his shop window for the duration of the display.

Those who missed the display in Errol Street will be pleased to learn that it will now be shown on the monitor behind the desk at the North Melbourne Library. We wish to particularly thank Alan for all his hard work, which will now be accessible to visitors to the North Melbourne Library.

#### **Talk – 25 November at 7.30 pm**

Our last event for the year was Guy Murphy's talk on the writing of *At Home on Hotham Hill*, (Annals of Hotham vol 4), the history of the "bougainvillea house" at 519 Dryburgh St. Hugh O'Neill, the current owner of the house, introduced Guy and told us about Guy's first visit to the house and his subsequent enthusiasm for researching its past.

Hugh also had some intriguing anecdotes of his own about the house and some of its former occupants.

#### **MEETINGS AND ACTIVITIES FOR 2009**

Hotham History Project Committee meetings are usually held bi-monthly on the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month at the North Melbourne Library. Committee meetings for 2009 will be on 24 February, 28 April, 23 June, 25 August, and 27 October at 7.30pm.

**Please mark the following dates on your 2009 calendar:**

#### **Talk – Tuesday 31 March at 7.30 pm by Gary Presland**

Originally scheduled for earlier this year, and cancelled because of delays in the publication of Gary's book on the natural history of the Melbourne region. *The Place for a Village: how nature has shaped the city of Melbourne* was launched at the Museum of Victoria on 25 November and is a very handsome publication. We are pleased to announce that Gary's talk will be our first event in 2009.

#### **Talk – Tuesday 26 May at 7.30pm by Lyndon Arnold**

Lyndon's ancestors built the intriguing 1850s shop/house on the south-east corner of King & La Trobe Streets. Lyndon has researched the Heffernan family who built the house and will talk about his forefathers' contribution to early West Melbourne history.

#### **Walk – Saturday 5 September at 2.00pm**

In 2002 the Hotham History Project published Winsome Robert's *Molesworth Street: A North Melbourne Neighbourhood, 1840-1905*. Join Winsome as she brings alive the tumultuous early years of settlement on Hotham Hill with the submergence of the natural landscape and the effect of the terrain on the social development on the hillside.

#### **History Week 2009**

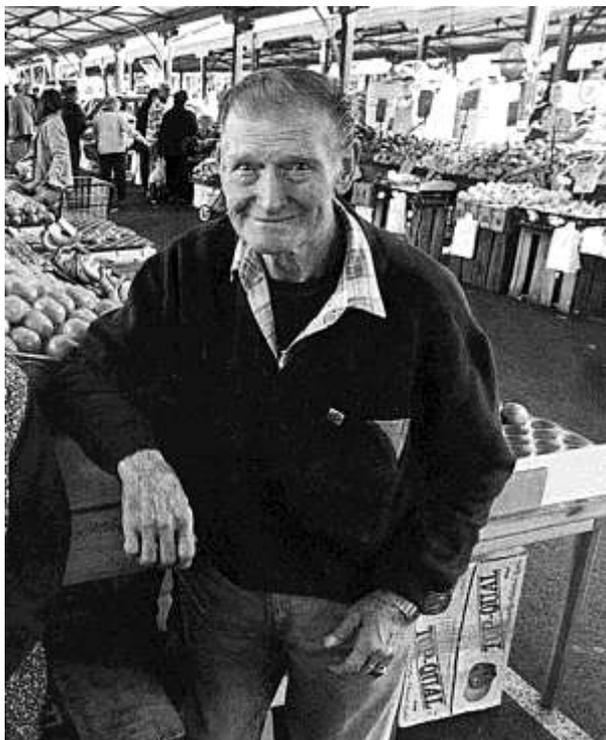
In 2008 the Royal Historical Society of Victoria initiated History Week as a forum for a wide range

of events encouraging people to explore Victoria's fascinating past. In 2009, History Week will be held from 1 to 8 November. The Hotham History Project proposes to run a walk to be included in the History Week Calendar of Events.

### **Walk – Saturday 7 November at 2.00pm**

North Melbourne developed rapidly in the 1850s in the wake of the gold rushes as hotels and businesses sprang up to provide temporary accommodation and the stabling and provisioning for horses for the immigrants pouring into the colony. As History Week is being held during the Racing Carnival, we propose to continue the horse theme and visit some of the sites in North Melbourne where businesses related to horses and carting once flourished.

### **OBITUARY**



**Earl at his stall no 114 at the market (from *Open for Business: Melbourne's Living History* by Ian Kenins, 1998)**

The death of Queen Victoria Market identity, Earl Hamilton, on 18 November marked the end of an era. By the time Earl eventually retired in early 2006, he had been working at the market for over 70 years, a record that is unlikely to ever be surpassed.

Earl Hamilton was born in 1924 at Peel Street, North Melbourne. His parents were also born in North Melbourne. Earl's mother died when he was twelve months old and he was raised by her parents. His maternal grandfather worked at the Queen Victoria Market before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the age of eight, Earl would get up about 3.00 or 4.00am to help his grandfather at his fruit stall before going home for breakfast and then heading reluctantly to school. Most of Earl's extended family worked at the markets, both in the wholesale and the retail markets. Earl knew at an early age that the market would be his life and he

found it very difficult to give up his stall as his health failed.

Earl met his wife Olive when he was in the RAAF during World War II and was stationed in South Australia, the only time he lived away from North Melbourne. They married when Earl was 20 and Olive 17 and were a devoted couple for 63 years.

Earl returned to the market after the war and helped his uncle before taking over stall 114 in B shed. Olive joined him at the stall in 1967 and they made a formidable team, always cheery and obliging. Earl loved talking about his early memories of the market – of the Chinese market gardeners arriving in the early mornings on horse-drawn carts, some fast asleep as their horses plodded the well-known route, and of the close-knit market families that have now dispersed. He was saddened by many of the changes at the market but admitted that he didn't like change and preferred the market as it was in the old days.

Earl was interviewed for the Hotham History Project in 1995 and spoke of his fond memories of growing up in North Melbourne. He remembered seeing films at the Imperial Theatre in Errol Street and when it was burnt down. Films were also shown at the North Melbourne Town Hall. There were rows of portable seats which could be flattened and put away when they held dances on Saturday nights. Earl remembered when many of the North Melbourne footballers attended these dances before the war.

Football was very much part of the culture of growing up in North Melbourne and Earl and his friends all went to the football to see North. They idolised the players and followed them around the streets. Earl described himself as a "traitor" because he left North Melbourne to support Melbourne. After the war, he had a chance to play with the seconds at Melbourne but didn't continue because he was working in the market.

Earl also remembered watching, as a small boy, the cattle being driven from the sale yards at Kensington along O'Shanassy Street. He was frightened and would get out of their way, although he liked to watch them going past.

Earl was very proud to be chosen to play the drums for St Mary's School in the St Patrick's Day procession. He talked about the large crowds that gathered to watch the annual processions.

But most of all, Earl talked about the Market and how much he loved working there.

The Queen Victoria Market has changed and most of the long-standing family stalls are gone. Earl Hamilton was the embodiment of a time when families held stalls for generations. He will be sorely missed. Our sympathy to Olive and his extended family and friends.

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***We wish you a joyous and peaceful Festive Season. We look forward to seeing you all at some of the events we have planned for 2009***