

CHAPTER XI.

Elwood Continued—The Western Swamp and the Elwood Swamp—The Government Surveyors Take Swamp's Levels View to Reclamation--Contract Let to Fill Up 134 Acres—St. Kilda, Council Co-operates with Government—A Labor Strikes-Crown Land Sales, Allotments and Prices—The Council and Restricted Shop Areas—Metropolitan Streams' and Watercourses' Bill—The Canal's Future—Snakes—St. Kilda's Main D r a i n s — S a n i t a t i o n .

HOWEVER welcome to the eye of a fowler a reed-covered "swamp may be, it is inevitable that when such a swamp retards the advancement of a municipality the civic authorities will make efforts to have the swamp lands reclaimed, and turned into a harvesting area for the collection of municipal rates. St. Kilda had within its area two swamps, though the area of the swamps spread over the St. Kilda boundaries lines into neighbouring lands. One of the swamps was called the Western swamp, and the other one was known as the Elwood swamp. The Western swamp was a continuation of marshy land from the south end of the present Albert Park lake. The surface of the marshland, in a south-westerly direction, sometimes in very wet seasons reached as far as the north end of Beaconsfield Parade. Ordinarily the swamp, following the falling levels, extended to the other side of the present St. Kilda railway embankment. Settlement was sufficient, in and about Fitzroy street, to make it desirable that the swamp should be drained. The railway loop line from St. Kilda to Windsor ran through the eastern portion of the swamp. We recall memories of the time, some fifty-five years ago, when we, with other schoolboys, thought it fun to step over a portion of the swamp by means of railway sleepers that were nailed to a small wooden viaduct, which had survived the demolition of the disused railway track. The line ran close to the south end of Albert Park lagoon, the main source of the swamp. This western swamp, within the boundaries of St. Kilda, was partly reclaimed by the St. Kilda Council in 1870. In the Council's first annual statement,

made under the Boroughs Statute, 1869, and dated the year ending September 30, 1870, the Council States :—"The principal works undertaken by the Council during the year have been the completion of the main drain, which was let for the sum of £1,997/4/6, and the drainage of the Western Swamp, which was undertaken at the instance of the Central Board of Health, through whose assistance one half of the cost was contributed by the Government. This contract was let for £2,096, one half being contributed as just stated, and £210 by the Borough Council of Prahran. The total valuation of the property in the Borough for the year 1869-70 was £99,899/10/-, upon which a rate of one shilling in the pound was stuck on the 7th day of March, 1870."

The Elwood swamp and marshy lands presented a more difficult problem to solve. The swamp's area was largely on Crown land, and out of the jurisdiction of the Council, though the waterflow knew no limits of man-made boundary lines. For lack of money for reclamation works the Councils of the first years of municipal administration were forced to leave south St. Kilda much as nature's forces had fashioned the terrain. The marshlands extended as far as the Garden Vale railway station, and thence came to St. Kilda nor'west, along Elster Creek, spreading out into two shallow lagoons, that commenced on a desolate area, now the Elsternwick Municipal Golf Links. The lagoon waters flowed towards the sea, and the further west from Garden Vale that flood waters drained to Elwood, the deeper Elwood swamp was surcharged with water. The actual area of Elwood swamp was 108 acres, though the swamp lands often exceeded that area.

In September, 1885, the Government instructed its surveyor to take the levels of the Elwood swamp for the purpose of reclaiming the land it covered. The Government let a contract to George Higgins, C.E., to fill up 134 acres of Elwood swamp adjacent to Barkly Street. The contract was signed on June 1, 1888. The remainder of the swamp, consisting of 26 acres, lay between Barkly Street and the beach. Those 26 acres belonged to private owners. The reclamation of this privately-owned portion of the swamp was made possible by the co-operation of the St. Kilda Council with the Government. The Council served the owners of the land with notices to raise their

land, and to dry up the swamp covering their property. Compulsion thus placed on the land owners, caused them to make arrangements with the Government to fill in the land under the general scheme of improvement, and to pay their share of the expenses to the Government. The amount of the Higgins contract for filling in the swamp was £40,000.

Higgins placed a small office on the edge of the swamp as a commencement of the work, but after some loads of filling had been tipped into the swamp, the effort to continue faltered. The delay was caused by Higgins's inability to obtain in Australia the necessary machinery to do the work. Higgins went to America for the purpose of buying a Von Schmidt suction dredging machine. Time was the essence of the contract. On inquiry, he learnt that he could order a machine to be made, and Von Schmidt undertook to ship it at San Francisco for Melbourne within ninety days. That was not satisfactory to Higgins. He decided to have the dredge made in Victoria. Accompanied by Captain Von Schmidt, the proprietor of the patent dredge, Higgins returned to Melbourne in August, 1888, and Schmidt came to St. Kilda, and had a look at the Elwood swamp. Higgins gave the order for the construction of a Schmidt dredging machine to the proprietors of the Langland's Foundry. They were to be assisted by Pye Buyers & Campbell, of South Melbourne.

When everything appeared to be in order, two labor strikes caused delay. The first strike was that of the coal miners in New South Wales, and it was followed by a strike of the iron-moulders in Victoria. With the machine, Higgins expressed his expectation of completing the contract in six months. The time agreed to in the contract, wherein the work was to be completed, was three years.

Higgins made a series of borings on the foreshore of the bay at Elwood. He found that splendid sand, and good clay, admirably suited for filling, could be obtained there. Elwood swamp was, with the aid of Von Schmidt's machinery, filled with clay and sand. The machine at the same time spread the clay and sand. The water, by means of chutes, drained into the bay. The Elwood swamp was in parts three feet six inches in depth. Banks of earth were placed around the swamp to retain the sand, and water, pumped into it by the dredge.

Connected with the reclamation of the Elwood swamp was the construction of a channel designed to further drain the marsh lands, and also to carry off the water from the eastern watershed. Roughly, the channel followed the line of the bed of the Elster Creek, where the creek's line conformed to a straight line. The work on the new channel was begun in May, 1889. Messrs. Hendon, Clarke & Anderson were the contractors, and their price for the making of a specified channel of the length of three quarters of a mile, 54 feet in width, and 11 feet in depth, was £14,000. Sixty men were employed on the work.

A contemporary report states the "channel will extend from highwater mark on the beach to Glen Huntly Road, taking the water from a natural creek that comes from miles inland and skirts the Elsternwick racecourse." The work was to be completed within twelve months. The sides of the channel were to be formed of concrete walls, estimated to enclose at low tide five feet of water, and at high tide eight feet of water. Streets, made through the swamp, were to be extensions of St. Kilda streets already made running north and south. Where these streets crossed the channel, bridges were to be constructed with brick pillars and iron girders. "The banks of the channel," continues the report, "will be provided with ring bolts for the purpose of mooring pleasure boats in the stream. The streets traversing the reclaimed swamp lands will be drained into the channel by 18 inch iron pipes, fixed in the concrete walls. The street on the beach will be called the Marine Parade, and it will necessarily be a beautiful spot for seaside residences, commanding, as it will, an excellent view of the bay, with large ships going hither and thither in the distance, and the vessels at Port Melbourne piers forming a forest of masts away in the north-west."

In July, 1889, the portion of the swamp lying between Barkly Street and the seashore, had a few houses erected upon it close to the beach, at places where the land was high enough to be immune from flooding. On other parts of the land were numerous sale boards of land agents. "Punch" had a sketch showing "Desirable Suburban Allotments at Elwood." In the picture, the sale boards were standing in a lake of water. At the time, a channel to drain swamp waters was being cut. The Government had purchased a strip of land for drainage purposes near the sea, measuring 300 feet by 100 feet.

Proposals were in the air to connect the St. Kilda railway by a loop line from Fitzroy Street station with the Brighton railway line, and it was suggested that the connecting rail link should run diagonally through the swamp. That railway was to immensely increase the value of the land when reclaimed, and this expectation explained why so many sale boards of land agents stood in marshy pools announcing "land for sale."

In February, 1899, the Inspector-General of Public Works made a survey of the Elwood canal. As a result, a five feet barrel drain was built at the joint cost of the St. Kilda and Caulfield municipalities. At the time the drain was built it carried to the sea both domestic drainage and storm water, from about 1,300 acres of closely-settled country. The drainage scheme was not a success on account of the tides holding back the water. Though the man in the street, and the residents of Elwood, did not refrain from criticising the St. Kilda Council for the whole of the annoyances which arose from the Elwood canal, the construction of the drain, and also the Elwood canal, which is 90 feet in width, were works carried out by the Public Works Department. No responsibility was recognised by the Council for the improvement, or the maintenance of the drain, or the canal, though the Council did, on many occasions, urge the Public Works Department to try to improve the canal, and to mitigate the nuisances arising from it.

We have before us the report of the St. Kilda Council for the municipal year of 1905. It states :—"The most important work initiated in the municipality during the corporate year ending 30th September, 1905, was the completion of the reclamation of the Elwood swamp, undertaken by the Bent Government. This work was commenced by the Hon. J. Dow, Minister of Lands in the Gillies-Deakin Ministry in 1887, when the filling was obtained from the bay by dredging, Mr. George Higgins, C.E., being the contractor. The canal, which cost a large sum of money, was also constructed in place of the Elster Creek. Included in the improvement now being carried on at Elwood is the partial reconstruction of the canal, at a cost of about £8,000. In addition, it has been extended from the weir at Glenhuntly Road bridge, beyond St. Kilda Street. In order to raise the surface of the reclaimed land to a proper level, a portion of the Red Bluff has been removed to provide the necessary material.

Roads have been marked out, and partially made, a plan of subdivision having been prepared by the Surveyor-General, and a total frontage of about 25,000 feet will be available for sale, in suitable building allotments. The whole area has now been effectively drained. Fully £30,000 has been expended to date upon the works, now nearing completion, with the result in the near future, that a new ward will be added to the city."

Sales of Elwood Crown lands took place on January 21, 1908. Allotments 7, 8, 9, Section 2a, frontage about 49 feet each by a depth of 132 feet were offered at the upset price of £2 per foot. Allotment 6, Section 2, with a frontage of 50 feet 9 inches by a depth of 118 feet, on which was erected a weather-board dwelling, containing eight rooms, in good order, and also stables, had an upset price of £500 the lot. At the corner of Thackeray Street and Marine Parade, allotment 5, section 28, with a frontage of 56 feet by a depth of 117 feet had an upset price of £2/10/-; fronting Thackeray Street, an allotment 66 feet frontage, by a depth of 107 feet, had its upset price fixed at 30/- per foot.

In November, 1908, the Premier, the Hon. Thomas Bent, issued the following balance sheet with regard to the improvements at Elwood :—Dr. works, material plant, £42,717; Bridges, £4,343; purchase of land, £3,475; filling purchased and private land (cost of latter borne by owners), £2,746; lining canal, £7,360; metal for and forming of tramway road, £1,367; estimated cost of completion, £2,000; balance estimated profit, £27,574. Total, £91,582. Cr. By filling private land (partly collected), £1,417; preparing metal for tramway road, £974; land sold, £1,191; estimated present value of unsold land, £88,000. Total, £91,582.

When the reclaimed lands of Elwood were ready for sale the question arose as to the method of their subdivision, and also as to the locality of restricted areas, if any, wherein shops could, or could not be built. These questions were within the jurisdiction of the Council, all subdivisional plans having to be approved by the Council before the vendor can sell his land in the form of subdivisional allotments. The St. Kilda Council was keen enough for the creation of a new residential area at Elwood, not only from the view-point of utilising the waste lands, but also for the material reason of the acquirement of a new rating area, and for a service by an electric tramway from Brighton

to St. Kilda, but the St. Kilda Council, while conscious of these accruing advantages, was determined also that the new area should be subjected to an application of town planning principles, and that there should be residential areas, and shop areas. The Council did not err in allowing too much space for shop areas. The Lands Department felt the power of the St. Kilda Council's authority, and it drew a long breath and waited. The Council considered that the Lands Department was somewhat dilatory, in selling the lands. It urged the Department, in September, 1922, to sell the balance of the Crown lands at Elwood. The Department, in replying to the request, asked the Council if it was prepared to relax its residential area by-law, to permit the erection of shops, and business premises on the Broadway and Glenhuntly frontages? The Council replied that the erection of business premises in Glen Huntly Road was permissible under the Council's by-laws, but the Council could not approve of the erection of other than residential premises on the Broadway frontage.

On February 19, 1923, a letter was read at the St. Kilda Council from the Lands Department forwarding its plan of the proposed subdivision of Crown land at Elwood, between the canal and Glen Huntly Road. The street on the west side of the subdivision was a continuation of Goldsmith Street, and the Department requested that the street be so named and proclaimed. The Department asked in view of the rapid development of Elwood, that the Council would reconsider the question of permitting the Broadway frontage to be used for business sites. The town clerk, Mr. Fred. W. Chamberlin, told the Council that the sites for the police station, and the public hall, had been fixed on the Broadway frontage, instead of upon Glen Huntly Road as originally intended. A considerable amount of discussion on the subject took place between the councillors. Various motions were floated that found no resting place. The councillors decided to inspect the locality, and they did so. It was not until the Council meeting held on April 9, 1923, that finality was reached, when the following motion, on notice, was carried unanimously:—

"That a by-law of the City of St. Kilda be and is hereby made and numbered 100 for the purpose of further amending by-law No. 98 by excising from the streets or portions of

the streets therein prescribed as residential areas the portion of Broadway on both sides between Glenhuntly Road and Shelley Street."

A sale of Crown lands took place at Elwood on November 14, 1913, the Government auctioneers being Baillieu, Patterson & Allard. Thirty-two allotments of land were offered for sale, and each lot was promptly sold at a price in excess of the upset price.

For an allotment with a frontage to Dickens Street, measuring 111 feet 10 inches by varying depth, the sum of £387/10/- was paid. The upset price was £300. Another lot having 63 feet frontage to the same street by a depth of 140 feet, realised £575. Other lots in the same street were bought at the rate of 15/10/- and 5/5/- per foot. A block of land at the corner of Dickens and Barkly Streets, one rood ten perches in area, with frontages to both streets by irregular depths, was sold for £520. The upset price was £400. For lots fronting Barkly Street, towards the Esplanade, the prices ranged from £5/10/- to £4; the upset price being £4 and £3/10/-. On the Broadway, on the line of the electric tramway, some four, or five lots, were sold at £3/17/6 down to £3/10/- per foot, while allotments fronting Rusden Street brought from £3 to £3/5/- per foot. Each of these allotments had a frontage of 66 feet, by a depth of 166 feet 8 inches. Land fronting the electric tramway, near to the Glenhuntly Road, 66 feet frontage, by a depth of 166 feet, was sold at £4/17/6 per foot, and £4/2/6 per foot, the upset price being £3/10/- per foot. Some half dozen allotments, fronting Glenhuntly Road, were bought from £4/2/6 to £4/18/- per foot. These lots had an area of 68 feet by a depth of 162 feet, down to 152 feet. The upset price was £3 per foot. The upset price of the land sold fixed by the Government was evidently, judging by the prices paid, a conservative one.

The prices realised at this Crown lands sale appeared to astonish holders of real estate, and several auctions followed of land, subdivided for suburban building allotments, in Elwood. For some reason the sale results were not so good as those obtained by the Government. At this time the land owned by Broadbent was offered for sale. The late John Broadbent claimed to be, and was, one of the earliest residents of Elwood,

and his name is mentioned in connection with public movements in Elwood. We recall that he said he had waited for years to see a railway to Elwood, and that he had given up hoping to see it in his lifetime. It was his son, Thomas Broadbent, of Vautier Street, Elwood, who was the vendor. The properties fronted Ormond Road, Docker, and Vautier Streets, and the Elwood Esplanade. Thirty-three allotments were offered by auction on the Saturday following the sale of the Crown lands. A large attendance at the sale suggested that the bidding was to be spirited, but the bidding proved to be sluggish, almost lifeless. Two allotments, on the crown of the hill, were the most desirable ones. The first allotment brought £6/10/- a foot, and was bought by an ex-mayor of Brighton, R. A. Edmanson. The sum of £6/5/- per foot was offered for the adjoining piece of land, which was below its reserve value, and it was not then sold. Out of 33 allotments offered for sale, only twelve were bought. A shop in Ormond Road, near Vautier Street, 26 feet by a depth of 110 feet, brought £5 per foot. Two allotments of land on the Esplanade, each 66 feet, by a depth of 165 feet, brought £6/10/- per foot. The Vautier, and Docker Street allotments realised from £3/14/6 to £3 per foot. The sum total of the land sold was £2,700.

The condition of the Elwood canal in the section next to the beach has always been more or less offensive in the summer months, though hundreds of pounds have been spent in attempts to mitigate the recurring conditions of a sea-locked drain. It was with relief that the St. Kilda Council learned that the Government was about to introduce a bill to bring the streams and main drains under a central control, and such bill became "The Metropolitan Drainage and Rivers Act, 1923."

Under the Metropolitan Drainage and Rivers Act, the Elwood canal has been declared a main drain, and so, if possible, its control is still further removed from the St. Kilda Council, being in charge now of the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. The Board's assistant engineer of rivers and streams has made proposals for adequately dealing with the Elwood canal. These proposals were before the St. Kilda Council in May, 1928. The scheme is to abandon the canal by filling it up, and if that were done, about 30 acres of land would be won, and available for sale. The cost to carry out the work is esti-

mated at £197,000. About £22,000 would be realised if the land between Glenhuntly Road, and the sea, were sold. The Engineer for Water Supply, Mr. E. G. Ritchie, stated the estimate was made on the assumption that any spoil from the new Cole Street drain at Brighton could be made available. Further, it was estimated that by utilising spoil which became available later for filling the canal between Glenhuntly Road and Garden Vale railway station, land would be recoverable to the value of £28,000. The cost of cleansing the canal in the year 1927 was £1,110. It was supposed that the cost of cleansing would increase to £2,000 a year. It will thus be seen that the expenditure of £197,000 should be credited with £50,000, plus £33,000, leaving a total of £114,000 as the net cost of the project. Three schemes were projected. The first provides for closing the canal entirely against the entrance of sea water by gates to open automatically during floods, and to be closed by hand, when the floods had passed. The total cost of this scheme was estimated at £57,000. The second scheme was to enlarge the existing canal and to regrade the bottom at a cost of £73,000. The third scheme was the one which Mr. Ritchie recommended to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works.

The particulars of these schemes were brought before the St. Kilda Council by Councillor Renfrey as a subject of local interest, but the proposed work was outside the province and jurisdiction of the Council. The obvious trend of the intentions of the Board is towards the abolition of the canal as it now exists. If this reclamation comes to pass, the last link with the first conditions of creek, swamps and fernlands that were associated with the place named Elwood will have passed away, and those who come hereafter, who are sufficiently curious to learn something of the original terrain, of acres of land, covered with modern suburban villas, will have to turn to such historical records as this municipal history to enable them to visualise the appearance of Elwood, in its early years of settlement. From a municipal point of view, if the proposed work is carried out, the size of the rate-returning area of St. Kilda will be increased. Clearly, the proposed reclamation works, the last of a series undertaken and accomplished at Elwood, will remove every source of complaint *arising* from the effluences from a sluggish stream of water in a canal that does not permit of sufficient fall

to force the water forward with a powerful enough impetus to overcome the sea water barrage at its mouth.

Having concurred in the decision to reclaim the canal, the Government allowed the proposal to drift. The residents of Elwood, represented by the Elwood Progress Association, became impatient at the continued delay. The St. Kilda Council was in full sympathy with its ratepayers at Elwood. At the Council meeting held December 3, 1928, the Public Works Committee made a recommendation, which was carried, on the motion of Councillor Robinson, seconded by Councillor Morley, "That, in regard to the recent complaints, of the insanitary condition, into which the Elwood canal is again drifting, that the Hon. the Minister of Lands be urged to expedite a decision on the proposal submitted by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works, as to the future treatment of the Elwood canal, which proposal is heartily endorsed by the Council, as an effective remedy of the present conditions." So far (1930) the work has not been commenced, but the member for St. Kilda, Councillor Burnett Gray, M.L.A., does not fail to urge the Minister of Lands to comply with the request of the St. Kilda Council. That the work will be done some time, is a foregone conclusion.

Two persons have been found drowned in the Elster canal. One was a curious derelict of a man, a well-known beach character, a "suburban beach comber," who sold "lily white mussels," and spent the proceeds of his sales in beer. He is supposed to have stumbled into the canal on the night of a great storm, and, being drunk at the time, was drowned. The other man was a journalist, Arthur Davis, who was drowned in the canal, on the night of July 31, 1898. At the inquests on both men, the coroner commented on the danger the canal was to wayfarers at night, owing to its unfenced condition. William Downe, the city engineer of St. Kilda, said the canal was nearly three-quarters of a mile in length, and it had only two lamps on its banks. The canal was under the control of the Crown Lands Department, but the Public Works Department had charge of the canal for the Crown Lands Department. He had urged that a fence be placed along the banks, but the Departments concerned did not follow his suggestions. Once a person fell into the canal, he would find great difficulty in getting out, as the walls were smooth and straight.

Snakes were numerous, in the year 1861, about the southern lonely parts of St. Kilda. The swamp land supplied the reptiles with a plentiful supply of food, and the fallen timber, reeds, and scrub afforded them a good shelter. In the out-lying parts of the municipality of St. Kilda, the huntsman could still, on odd occasions, find a kangaroo, or a dingo, in the bush, extending from where the golf links are now to Brighton. It is on record that two police troopers, "cadets," were reprimanded for losing time through galloping after a dingo that passed across their path when they were on duty, and on their way to Brighton. At the weekly meeting of the St. Kilda Council, held on Wednesday, January 9, 1861, the town clerk informed the Council that the whole amount paid as yet in the 2/6 premium per head for the capture of snakes on the lands of St. Kilda was 7/6. In proof of the probability of attempts being made to impose on the Council by dishonest persons claiming the reward in respect to snakes submitted to him as reptiles killed within the boundaries of the municipality, he told the story of a boy who had produced to him that day four snakes for the destruction of which he claimed 10/-. On the Monday before, the boy had applied to the town clerk of Emerald Hill for a reward, but that Council had not then offered rewards for the destruction of snakes. On being refused the reward at St. Kilda, the boy said he would apply to the Council at Sandridge. In the same month (January), a butcher named Mawby was riding on horseback past the Elwood swamp, after leaving his work at the abattoirs, on his way home to Elsterwick. In a paddock, near to the rifle butts, he saw, coiled in the *long grass*, two black snakes. Dismounting from his horse, he succeeded in killing both of the reptiles. One snake measured four feet four inches, and its companion was, in length, four feet seven inches.

We can recall the time when it was said that there were beds of peat beneath the brackish waters of the Elwood swamp, but there was no evidence that such was the *case*, nor did it ever prove to be so. Some there were, who asserted the peat was coal, and that the run of the coal was to the Red Bluff, and so west to beneath the sea bed of Hobson's Bay. A company called "The Victorian Coal Mining Company," was floated to bore for coal deposits around the shores of Hobson's Bay. The Government granted a license to the company that allowed

its members to bore for coal within a radius of fifty miles. The company's advisers thought that a site near to the Red Bluff, St. Kilda, was a promising place whereat to start the search. The bore was put down at a spot opposite the slaughter house. In January, 1894, the company's engineers placed a stout angle-ironed poppet head, such as is used for boring operations, on the cliff, and there they commenced work, using a drill, that was said to have cost £2,000. When the drill reached a depth of 101 feet, it passed through a seam of brown coal, about 4 feet 6 inches in depth. Afterwards, the bore reached a bed of fine blue clay, depth, 230 feet. The company was more than disappointed, since it was coal the company sought, not lignite. The roseate spiritual dreams of the "members of the company of turning Elwood into a coal mining district were never materialised.

This Victorian Coal Mining Company was an extraordinary company, since its actions were subject to the directions of an unknown quantity known as "Pat." "Pat" was the medium, in the spirit world, who communicated the information used in the drilling to Miss Geraldine Helena Minet, and it was from "Pat" that she received the "tip"—if such a common word may be used in such an uncommon relation—that beneath the Red Bluff Cliff a deposit of coal awaited discovery by the drill. Miss Minet came from England to Melbourne in the year 1888, and she was a woman of means. She remained in Melbourne until 1895, when she returned to England. She is now about eighty years of age. While in St. Kilda she met Miss Agnes Simmons, who lived then at 94 Pakington Street, St. Kilda. They became great friends, a friendship that continued until Miss Simmons' death. Miss Simmons, too, was a remarkable woman in her own way, and quite in advance of the fashions for the day, for she wore bloomers—a sort of plus four combination—in her walks abroad in St. Kilda. She taught swimming in Hegarty's Baths, and was associated, in doing so, with a well-known teacher of swimming of those days, Miss Elphistone Dick. Miss Simmons was, too, a convert to spiritualism, and shared Miss Minet's unwavering faith in "Pat," who, in the end, appeared, by results, to have been a bit of a rascal, for he deceived the ladies, so far as he did not lead them to black coal. Miss Simmons invested some of her money in the mine. There were also other shareholders, though

Miss Minet was the backbone, financially and spiritually, of the whole venture. The driving engine beneath the poppet head was named "Helena." A very large brass tablet on the boiler of the engine proclaimed that was so. The actual depth bored was 3957 feet 2 inches, and the estimated cost of the attempt to find black coal under the Red Bluff at St. Kilda was £6496. R. H. Blackwell was the manager of the coal company, and W. Milne was the foreman. The books of the mine are at the Melbourne University. The Misses Minet and Simmons owned land at Clayton, which was farmed after a fashion, awaiting the time for coal to be found at St. Kilda. The bore was then to be removed to Clayton. At least, that was supposed to be the intention of Miss Minet. Mither Miss Simmons nor Miss Minet would allow a masculine member of the furred, haired, or feathered tribe on the farm. At her death, Miss Simmons, who was a friend to all animals, left her estate to the Society for the Protection of Animals.

Reference to utility works, such as the construction of the main drains of a municipality is necessary, though such works, in themselves, may not be interesting to read about. Main drains were difficult and expensive works for young councils to undertake to make, and though to-day the beds of such drains are permanently fixed it was not so, in the first days, when the Councils' surveyors had to take advantage of the lowest levels, and at the same time to bear in mind the general topography of the municipality, and the situation of the houses and the location of the streets such main drains had to be designed to serve. The Government opened up the suburban country by holding Crown sales of land contiguous to Melbourne. To enable that to be done, the Government surveyors plotted roads. They drew divisional lines on their maps, and called them "Government Roads." The roads' names came afterwards by chance, or design. No provision was made when such Crown land sales took place for drainage of the allotments sold. That was the purchaser's business. Many purchasers found that when the general scheme of municipal drainage was evolved they would have to allow the municipal drains to go through their properties, subject to certain compensations to be paid to them.

In December, 1857, a notice was inserted in "The Argus" newspaper of considerable interest to St. Kilda landholders,

whose properties were affected. The St. Kilda Council was about to commence the work of the drainage of St. Kilda. The notice was to this effect:—

ST. KILDA MUNICIPALITY.

"NOTICE.—The Municipal Council of St. Kilda, being about to contract for the formation of a watercourse, about ten feet wide, for carrying off the rain, and surface water, and otherwise draining the low lands of the municipality, extending from Chapel Street to, and across High Street, Brighton Road, thence to Barkly Street, Punt Road, running about equidistant from Inkerman Street, on the north, and Carlisle Street and the Beach Road, on the south, hereby intimate to the owners, and occupiers of the land, that, in virtue of the powers conferred on them by the Municipal Act 18, Victoria, No. 15, they have entered upon the land, and marked out the line along which they purpose to conduct the said watercourse.

"And that plans thereof will be seen at the surveyor's office, Court House, St. Kilda, until Friday, the 11th inst.

"D. PROPHET, Town Clerk.

St. Kilda, 4th December, 1857."

A deputation of the St. Kilda Council waited on Dr. Evans at the Public Lands office on July 19, 1859, and he then promised the Council to place a sum on the estimates for the ensuing year, for the purpose of forming the portions of Chapel Street, which lay within the boundaries of the municipality. The Government, he said, intended to carry out the work themselves. Dr. Evans also promised the Council to place another sum upon the estimates to carry out the drainage of East St. Kilda.

In September, 1861, a note is made in the municipal records of the urgent necessity for completing the proper drainage of the low lands of St. Kilda, that had been so frequently pressed on the Council. The "pressure" came from the residents, who in the time of winter and heavy rains had been flooded out. The town surveyor was instructed to examine his original plans and estimates, to check his calculations of the quantities of water to be discharged, and when he had done these things, to report to the Council the result. The town surveyor, in due course, furnished the councillors with particulars of the data upon which he had made his calculations. He gave an estimate

of the cost of the whole work, and also the probable cost of various sections of the drainage scheme. The Council decided to complete the portion of the drainage scheme from the open beach to Acland Street. The work was thereupon let by tender. The contractor's tender, £2,000, was the same amount as the town surveyor had estimated to be the cost of the work. In March, 1862, the first portion of the main drain had also been completed. The main drain, at that time, was found to be amply sufficient to discharge all the waters of St. Kilda, and also those that came from the watershed of Caulfield, and elsewhere. In the year 1865, we find a note to the effect: "The contract for the main drain has been satisfactorily completed, and answers the Council's most sanguine expectations." In the year 1881, the Council's report states that the health of a considerable portion of the borough has been improved by the construction of that portion of the main drain, passing through the grounds of the Balaclava State School, and extending beyond Woodstock Street. This work, to the extent of one half of its total cost, was assisted by the Government. The Council add, that it is proposed, in the same manner, and with a like subsidy from the Government, to complete the drain, to join the drain constructed in Grosvenor Street.

In the year 1883, the important work of constructing the main western drain was begun. Its cost, when completed, was estimated at not less than £5,260, but the spending of such a sum was considered to be of incalculable benefit from a sanitary standpoint. The adequate drainage of the land had the effect of greatly increasing the value of the west beach lands.

In March, 1884, the St. Kilda Borough Council made an inspection of the new works undertaken out of a £25,000 5 per cent. corporation loan which the Commercial Bank had taken up. The report of the inspection gives a clear idea of the state of St. Kilda and the improvements going forward in the year 1884. At the Esplanade, the Council, out of the loan moneys, had formed a "new carriage drive," which it was purposed to call the "Lower Esplanade." The drive was a chain in width, and the broad footpath (12 feet) was to be asphalted and channelled. A neat close iron fence was placed on the outer side to keep the beach sand from encroaching on the roadway. The report states "the St. Kilda Council is not yet satisfied that

everything has been done to keep St. Kilda in the forefront from a national point of view. The road is some day to go to Point Ormond, with the sea on one side, and public gardens on the other. So far, the highway breaks off abruptly for want of funds, and the gardens are represented only by a worthless desert, which belongs to the Government, but the Council is going to ask the Government to hand it over to the municipal body, on the condition, that a garden is made of it. The cost of the Lower Esplanade was £3,000."

A work of equal importance, the report said, was the main western drain, which was opened in the beginning of March, 1884. The drain was described as a stone culvert 4 feet 6 inches in diameter, and it replaced an 18 inch drain, which was too small, and ran in a more tortuous course through Albert Park to the West Beach. From the St. Kilda railway line to its outlet, a distance of 27 chains, the culvert which is 41 chains in length, is covered in. The cost was £5,300. The Government contributed £1,125. The Prahran City Council was to be asked to bear a proportion of the cost, as part of the drainage from Windsor was carried in the drain. "The drain was scoured by each tide," the report said, but hope was father to that remark. A sum of £150 was paid by the St. Kilda Council to the Railway Department for a brick culvert running under the line.

The third largest sum provided out of the loan was the reconstruction of the Brighton Road from Carlisle Street to the Glen Huntly Road, the southern boundary of the St. Kilda borough. In 1875 tolls, which on this road yielded about £1,700 per annum, were abolished. Owing to the heavy traffic of the market gardeners from Brighton and neighboring districts the road fell into disrepair, and became almost impassable. The Council voted £3,500 to remedy this neglect, and the work of repair was very thoroughly done. The road was straightened. Where necessary, it was cut down to its appointed level and metalled, so that, from one end of the road to the other end, there was a pleasing perspective of double rows of young trees on either side. Those trees were planted three or four years before the road was repaired. The trees were, in 1884, growing well. Loads of gravel to the extent of 2,500 cubic yards were taken from Brighton Road in St. Kilda when the cutting down of the road took place, and the spoil of gravel was used to improve other roads in St. Kilda.

In the year 1893, with a view to still further improve the sanitary condition of the city, and to provide work for a number of men unemployed, the Council decided to apply to Parliament for authority to vary the application of certain loan moneys, comprised in Loans 1 and 2, amounting to the sum of £14,373/5/8. Through the efforts of Councillor the Honorable George Turner, M.P., was prepared and passed, by Parliament, the St. Kilda Loan Act, 1893. The second schedule of the Act authorised the Council to spend £4,061/9/6 for metalling the streets; £940/19/6 for channelling; £3,367/8/- for tar paving; £5,290/2/8 for sewers in Carlisle, Fitzroy and Inkerman Streets; £60 for alterations to the bridge at Queen's Road; £181/10/- for the completion of the footpath on the Lower Esplanade; £150 for fencing at the dust tip; £90 for a crossing, Upper Esplanade, at Victoria Street and Alfred Square; £151/16/- for fencing at Alma Park and £80 for a culvert at Orrong Road. These works were commenced by the Council after the necessary consent of the holders of the loan debentures had been obtained. As a further advance in the sanitation of the city, the Council, on September 7, 1893, entered into a contract with Williams, Turner & Nance, for the removal of nightsoil upon the double pan day service system.

That was hailed by the residents as a sanitary blessing, and no one who had gone through the repulsive period when sanitary carts polluted the air of night could feel otherwise than that a new and better era had dawned. In Elwood, the night-soil depot was admitted to be an abomination. With the public so well educated as it is to-day, on the means to be taken to preserve the health of the community, it is almost unbelievable that the authorities were so blind as to have appointed the paddock, that now forms the Blessington Street gardens, as a place where the nightsoil of St. Kilda could be buried in furrows scored by the plough. Whatever individual members of the St. Kilda Council thought about the horrible practice, the St. Kilda Council, as a corporate body, permitted the burying of the night-soil to continue. A deputation waited on the Hon. Francis Longmore, in October, 1877, with regard to the practice of depositing nightsoil in the reserve near Blessington Street. The St. Kilda residents, adjacent to the reserve, complained that a great nuisance was committed thereby. The Minister, in answer to

the deputation, stated that if the Council was permitted to continue depositing nightsoil in this place, it would be only on such stringent conditions as would provide that the health of the neighbourhood should not be endangered. The Secretary to the Central Board of Health wrote to the Council with regard to the deposit of nightsoil on the Recreation Reserve. He said that the water which lodged on one portion of the reserve was liable to pollution, by the percolation of the nightsoil, through the very sandy soil of the place. In order to avoid offence, he suggested that the Local Board of Health should have the low-lying portion of the reserve filled up to such a level as would prevent the collection of stagnant water, or the Local Board should have a drain cut to carry off the water to the beach.

We think that the Council ceased depositing the nightsoil in the Reserve in deference to the wishes of the residents, but the depot for nightsoil at Elwood was surcharged in consequence of that remission. At a later date, depots were established far afield at Moorabbin, but the trouble was the cartage. The greatest of all administrative acts for the sanitation of cities came when the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works was constituted, and began its beneficent works under powers given to it under the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Act.

During the year 1894 the Council accepted the tender of S. Willis Brothers for constructing sewers on both sides of Carlisle Street to Hotham Street at a cost of £1,490. This work had the effect of improving the appearance of the street in addition to making its drainage perfect. In the same year a contract was accepted of Messrs. Tighe, for powering Fitzroy Street, from Grey Street to the Esplanade, and thence along Beaconsfield and Military Road, to the main western drain, in a line with Cowderoy Street. The approximate cost of the work was £957/15/4.

All these works speak of the steady progress of the municipality of St. Kilda. They were among the principal activities of the Council, but there were, in addition to them, many other works of minor import carried out that added to the sum total of the St. Kilda Council's excellent work, year in, and year out.