



# St Kilda Historical Society

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ABN: 25 188 646 275

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

*Our AGM will be upon us soon on the 21 July, the meeting after next. It seems incredible that almost a year has lapsed since the last election. I believe that the Society has made great strides since then. We are very fortunate that **Peter Johnson** has recently accepted the honorary position of Heritage Officer for the Society. He brings not only a wealth of experience as a practicing heritage architect but also an enormous passion and interest in St Kilda. He can be contacted for heritage inquiries via our web site, by phone 9525 3696 or email: [prj@mac.com](mailto:prj@mac.com).*

*As you may be aware we applied for funding to the Local Government History grants late last year for funds to catalogue our collection and to publish the Chronicle this year. Unfortunately, neither application was successful.*

*We have decided as a result not to publish the Chronicle this year. Instead we will publish submitted articles regularly in the newsletter instead. We begin with the first installment in this edition with Amanda Larcombe's marvellous and true story on 'foundling' twins abandoned in St Kilda over a century ago.*

*We still have two funding applications before the City of Port Phillip for a history of hotels in St Kilda and South Melbourne as well as a children's history mystery story about the historical character of Granny of 1872.*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held 21 July 2001 at the St Kilda Library Community Room at 2.00 commencing 2.30 p.m. See notice. All memberships expire on the 1 July this year and may be renewed by post or before the AGM. The cost remains only \$15.00.

Our AGM guest speaker at 3.15 pm is Carolyne Rasmussen, the award-winning author of the history of Museum Victoria.

## GENERAL MEETINGS

Our guest speakers at our next meeting at the 16<sup>th</sup> June at 2.30 p.m. at the St Kilda library will be the two authors employed by the Society to complete our publications on buildings and churches in St Kilda. This is a marvellous opportunity to ask questions about St Kilda's heritage and to provide any information you may have on these buildings.

Note that there has been a **change of date** for the St Kilda historic rail walk originally scheduled by the Australian Railways Historical Society for October. **The new date is now Tuesday 12 November at 6.30 pm** (see public events calendar).

## GRANNY AT ST KILDA PARK PRIMARY

Recently, Meyer Eidelson and Pearl Donald in her Granny guise, visited two Grade One classes and took fifty seven year olds and ten parents on a walking tour of Fitzroy Street including inside Enfield and Wattle Houses and The George. The children have since sent the Society three letters inc.:

*Dear Granny,*

*Thank you giving us the boiled lollies. Everyone had lots of fun. The mansions were cool. We loved the story.*

*Love from Grades One B and X.*

Pearl's amazing research skills have recently uncovered Granny's true identity after 130 years. A future newsletter will tell the whole story and we also plan an exhibition on Granny in the library foyer.

## BAY VIDEO PROJECT

The second volume of ScreenSound Australia's video Bayside reflections was launched in St Kilda on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Society has purchased a copy and will arrange a future viewing for members.

## ST KILDA CEMETERY TOURS

**Sunday 23 June at 2.00 PM:** Notable Malvern People;

**Sunday 25 August at 2.00 PM:** An illustrated (slide) tour of European Cemeteries (Moscow and Vienna) – venue to be confirmed.

**Sunday 27 October at 2.00 PM:** Horticultural Tour of the Cemetery.

**Sunday 24 November at 2.00 PM:** Notable women of St Kilda Cemetery.

Cost \$5.00. *Inquiries Pearl 9531 6832.*

## GILLISON MEMORIAL DAY 25 AUGUST

St Georges Church St Kilda 10.00 AM. Our Society will provide the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion banner and the 100 Years Book.

*Inquiries Chris Waters 0419 032 109.*

## VICTORIAN COMMUNITY HISTORY AWARDS

Our Society had major achievements in the state awards announced at Parliament in May. Congratulations to our own **Gillian Upton** who won the overall award for best publication in Victoria for her book on *The George. Life and Times of St Kilda*. Committee member **Vida Horne** was the editor of Carol Rasmussen's book that won a category award. Carol will be our guest speaker at our AGM on the 21 July.

Our President **Meyer Eidelson** won a commendation in the Walks section for his book *Walks in Port Phillip*. **Pat Grainger** and her daughter **Mary Mason** from the Port Melbourne Historical Society won the best collaborative work category for *Linking Us Together*.

## THE FOUNDLINGS: VICTORIA WATERLOO AND DAISY FLINDERS

By Amanda Larcombe,

*"An abandoned child, found on the door-step in Waterloo-street, was brought before the Bench and remanded."*

*St Kilda Police Court, Friday June 22 1883*

In 1883, a tiny baby was found in St Kilda. and nicknamed *Victoria Waterloo*. Over a century was to pass before this event was connected to a legend in my family.

According to this legend my great - grandmother Daisy Kathleen O'Connell was one of twins found on the doorstep of a local church and was brought up independently and unaware of her twin sister Violet Millership.

When I took an interest in family history in my early teens, it was beyond me then how anybody could so cruelly separate twins. Surely somebody could have cared for both the poor little babies? I had no inkling of how harsh living in Melbourne in 1883 might have been, especially for somebody responsible for two babies.

Despite extensive research my great uncle and aunts (son-in-law and daughters of the foundling Daisy) were unable to find any information whatsoever about the twins, their origin, or their early lives. They remained a mystery. Without connection to the family tree of their adoptive families, no information could be added about Daisy's real origins.

Both foundlings were unaware of their relationship until shortly before marriage although they attended the same church - the Baptist Tabernacle at Collingwood until adulthood. They were so alike that a relationship was suspected raising speculation and comment. Apparently however neither girl even knew that they were fostered until birth certificates had to be produced for marriages in 1911.

What a shock! Both fiancés were appalled. Foundlings, no families, no origins. Nobodies!

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**THE FOUNDLINGS:  
VICTORIA WATERLOO AND DAISY FLINDERS *continued***

The marriages went ahead but both girls carried the stigma for the remainder of their lives.

It was quite by accident that the true history of the foundlings was 'rediscovered'. I had exhausted all avenues of family research on my father's side in the Australiana Room at the Ballarat Library on a Sunday afternoon, but had a half hour before the doors closed. Research time is precious as I work full time and have a family. I couldn't bear to waste half an hour so I ploughed my way willy-nilly through microfiche records, searching for family names in whatever came to hand.

I scanned the Children's Register and found a name of interest. It was Daisy O'Connell, my great grandmother, and couldn't believe my eyes when I got to the ledger pages that read:

*Emily Station (a foundling) now known as Daisy Flinders (and later Daisy O'Connell) found by Mrs Swan, in the closet of the Ladies Waiting rooms on 13/6/83 at 8.30pm at the Flinders Street railway station.*

I searched the ledger for the twin but there was no mention of another. I sat stunned in the Ballarat Library.

Behind me suddenly a woman squealed, her companion hugged her and they exclaimed together. "I knew it!" I'm not sure what they had discovered but my great grandmother had been found in a closet – did that mean a water closet? I rang my mother, grandmother, great uncle and aunts, hesitant at how they would take the news but they were ecstatic. 'The Railway Station Waiting Room! So many times I went there and I never knew!

Then the inevitable: 'But what about Violet?'

I promised that I would spend the next Sunday afternoon researching Violet. Violet was a lot harder to find. I became convinced that the great aunts were wrong. Their mother couldn't have been one of twins. There must have been one of those sad family situations where children's details are changed for whatever reason; a family shame or maybe a grand daughter brought up as daughter.

But the aunts were adamant. The foundlings were twins. Bit by bit I collected information about the family but always came up with dead ends on the baby. Finally in desperation rather than go home on the third Sunday afternoon and avoid the aunts again, I began to search the six microfiche comprising the Children's Register from beginning to end. The records are listed by name in alphabetical order, all I had to do was check every date and investigate all of the foundlings for that year. Daisy's estimated date of birth was May 1883 so if Violet was not found/born in 1883 or 1884 then they could not have been twins but maybe sisters (or cousins or even aunt/niece).

I saw stars after the first hour of searching through every single name in the microfiche index but doggedly continued until closing time. The following Sunday I completed the search and came up with only three female foundlings in 1883. Daisy was one, no twins. I searched the ledger pages for the other two. Many sad stories distracted me, one baby not meant to live – found exposed in a railway yard; another the traditional foundling – in a cardboard box on a doorstep, note pinned to the blanket; brothers and sisters whose mother had died now being placed into foster care.

## **THE FOUNDLINGS: VICTORIA WATERLOO AND DAISY FLINDERS *continued***

But finally: *'Victoria Waterloo (later Violet Millership – ed.) found on the doorstep of (omitted or deleted) on 13/6/83 at Waterloo Street, St Kilda.*

The same day! The twins were abandoned *separately* on the very same day – one at Flinders Street, one at St Kilda. They were apparently deliberately separated; were entries in a ledger distanced by eight double pages. Yet fate had intervened and the foster parents who raised them were neighbours in Collingwood.

No wonder my great uncle had never been able to find information. He had been seeking information on *twins*. This information has solved one mystery but raised a myriad of questions. Daisy's ledger states *'Judson – see mandate'*. What does this mean. Is it possible that there is a court record somewhere? Did the real mother come forward and give up her babies officially or was Judson a wet nurse? I have been unable to find a recorded birth for any twins around May 1883 under any of the names that I have. It seems that Violet's foster mother (named Harvey) married again hence the name Millership. I know little about Violet's family.

There are so many other questions:

Who was Mrs Swan? Did she ever relate her feelings at finding a baby in the waiting room?

Did foundlings make the papers in 1883?

Waterloo Street St Kilda – on whose doorstep was Violet abandoned?

Was the choice of dumping grounds random or deliberate and by whom?

Was the true mother living at the time of abandonment or had she died and the family was unable to care for babies?

The fostering neighbours in Collingwood, were they volunteers at the orphanage or did they know the real mother and step in on her behalf?

When did it become apparent that the babies were very much alike? Did the foster parents have any inkling that the babies were related?

What was life like for women and children in 1883? How were orphans treated and where were foundlings placed?

It has taken decades of researching to come across this much information and if it hadn't been for the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies Inc. who published the Children's Registers of State Wards in 1996 we would probably never have known this much. I hope to find more time to research the answers to these questions.

The family believes that the babies were intended to be found and not callously abandoned. There is a lot more to this story, it is only just beginning. Only one child of Daisy remains living although recently descendents of Violet have been traced. Hopefully more information can be gathered and conserved for those who may be interested in the extraordinary story of abandoned twins in 1883.