



St Kilda Historical Society

No. 167

JUNE 2004

ABN: 25 188 646 275

Patron: Sir Zelman Cowen

Secretary, P.O. Box 177 Balaclava; Phone: 9690 9584, 0408 894 724

Email: meyereidelson@yahoo.com; Website: www.vicnet.net.au/~hsosk (Society)
www.skhs.org.au (Publications); Editor: Melinda Haldon mhaldon@bigpond.com

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Our launch of the **Screening of St Kilda** at the Astor was a great success with up to 80 people congregating in the beautiful art-deco surrounds on the ground floor. We have sold over 100 books - covering all our publication & launch costs. There was extraordinary media coverage including a huge spread in **The Age**, Emerald Hill, ABC Radio and 3RRR.

Many thanks to the many members who organised this event particularly **Kay Brett**. Our exhibitions officer Mary-Therese followed up with an exquisite display for a month in the St Kilda library.

Our earlier book '**Spirit of St Kilda**' also recently won an **award** in the research section of the **Victorian Community History Awards**.

Meanwhile, after winning the tender, **John Hulskamp** is hard at work on the production of our next two publications '**Hotels**' as well as '**Significant Buildings**'.

Our campaign to protect heritage trees of the City has taken a very positive turn with the COPP responding by placing 29 trees on private land into the planning scheme.

However, the big news is the Service Agreement. For 30 years the Society has campaigned for long-term premises like other Societies. The historic Agreement to be signed with the City (see article below) will put out Society on a **sustainable footing** and help us focus on the real task of **promoting cultural heritage** and not just surviving the workload on volunteers.

Meyer Eidelson

HISTORIC SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH CITY OF PORT PHILLIP

The Committee of Management is finalising the signing of a Service & Licence Agreement resulting from various negotiations with the City of Port

Phillip, some spanning several years. This agreement will provide great benefits to the Society including:

- Written commitment to the facilities the Society currently enjoys.
- An ongoing room in the St Kilda Library (former Audio-Video room).
- An Internet link.
- A Phone link in both the collection room and the new office.
- Direct funding up to \$4,000 p.a. for SKHS project proposals approved by the COPP. This is independent of and will not prevent application to other COPP Grant Programs.
- Sale of the Society's books by the library.

The City is finalising a similar agreement with the Port Melbourne Historical Society and our societies have worked closely together in preparing our responses. Our Society's responsibilities under the service agreement include responsible management of facilities, summary reporting to CoPP on the outcome of our activities and projects and participation in the Urban History Advisory Committee.

The Society is grateful to the goodwill and commitment shown by COPP - particularly the staff actively involved in the negotiations - Ian Hicks, Damien Tyquin & Ruth McLean.

DONATIONS - SIDNEY HECTOR PLYMIN - April 2004

In February 2004, **Sidney Hector Plymin** donated a beautiful framed scholarship certificate to the St Kilda Historical Society, which he had won at Kilda Primary School in 1931. The Society in turn donated it to the students of St Kilda Primary at an assembly of the entire school, teachers & parents on the morning of 17 May 2004.

Sidney, aged eighty-eight, was born in 1916. Tragically his father died of Spanish flu two years later leaving his mother to care for seven children aged under 15. The family lived in Argyle & Jervois Streets, St Kilda before his mother later purchased a home in Gourlay Street for £1,000.

The most important moment of Sid's childhood was winning the **J L Williams Memorial Scholarship** at St Kilda Primary School in 1931. His mother had encouraged & urged him to believe that he could win it, despite there being 50 children in each class as the family was too poor to send him to High School (in those days there were School Fees). Due to the severe Depression in the 1930s, winning a Scholarship worth £6 was a highly-prized event - as indicated by the calligraphic detail in the certificate.

According to Sidney, there were three tests to pass to win the Scholarship. He won the first; his sister won the second and he & his sister jointly won the third. Sidney received the Scholarship as his sisters were in an earlier year and not ready to go to High School. To qualify, Sidney also had to be good at sport. He was very small as a boy but good at "swooping up a football on the outside of the pack".

The signatures on the scholarship include:

- **Burnett Gray** - the Lord Mayor
- **Frederick Chamberlain** - the Town Clerk
- **Arnold Newey** - Head of the Royal Life Saving Club

The headmaster was the father of **Douglas Paratt** MBE, who was a close friend of Sidney and later became Personal Assistant to Thomas Blamey and a captain of industry.

Sidney left Melbourne High School after two years to get a job in a firm. He later served in New Guinea during the war and moved to Ferntree Gully where he became a builder. He built his own home at 34 Veronica Street, as well as 45 others.

For 74 years Sidney kept this Scholarship certificate on his wall to remind him of his mother's encouragement & of the achievement which gave him a headstart in life. On 26th February 2004, the last day before he & his wife moved to a retirement village, he took down the certificate and handed it over to the St Kilda Historical Society.

Sidney, by the way, was delighted to hear of our donation to his old school. In the morning of the presentation it was discovered that the 1929-30 scholarship certificate had previously been donated...so the two will now hang sided by side.

Three other items were also donated to the Society by Sid on that day And will be included in the skhs collection. They included:

1. A hand pushed mechanical **mower** (labeled "speedy cut" ball bearing" on the wheels)

belonging to St Kilda Council in about 1916 with STKCC engraved on the shaft. It belonged to his Uncle Henry Neal who worked for the council & later worked at Flatmans Timberyard at the corner of Marriot Street & Inkerman Street, Balaclava.

2. A set of 24 **carpentry periodicals** issued in about 1907 that belonged to his Uncle Charles Kenner who -worked as a carpenter despite losing an arm in the war. They are titled: 'A set of Cassell's Carpentry and Joinery. Comprising Notes on Materials and Processes, Principles & Practices including about 1500 Engravings & Twelve Plates, Edited by Paul Hasluck Cassell and Company Ltd, London Paris New York and Melbourne. Price 4d.
3. A hard cover bound book of **Cassell's Saturday Journals** which belonged to Sidney's mother dated 1886.

MEMORY PACKS NOW ON THE WEB!!

1. **Memory Packs St Kilda** was an exhibition of objects that evoked stories or memories. Young people, old people, people from diverse backgrounds, artists, entertainers, the famous, the infamous & the not yet discovered - all were asked to contribute an object of personal significance & a story.

The result was an **eclectic range of treasured possessions** that reveal witty, intimate, tender & sometimes painful experiences.

The **objects & stories** were exhibited in shop windows, galleries, libraries & public buildings throughout the City of Port Phillip.

The exhibition illustrated how **what we hold onto & what we discard** tells us a lot about who we are as a community. The combination of the residents' stories & their objects reveals complex layers of culture & subculture in the city life of Port Phillip.

They can be found at <http://www.experimenta.org/gallery/memorypacks>

2. **MARGINS, MEMORIES & MARKERS ST KILDA STORIES NOW ON THE WEB**

(mmm) is a **unique public art project** that has drawn on stories from the local community to create 6 new permanent public artworks and 28 bronze plaques in the City of Port Phillip.

Presented by the City of Port Phillip and supported by VicHealth's Arts & Environment Scheme.

mmm celebrates the personal memories that connect people to place.

mmm is about social connectedness & valuing diversity.

Public workshops were conducted in 2001 by writer/artist **Julie Shiels** to identify sites & gather stories. In addition to these workshops, a process of more targeted memory-gathering ensured participation from socially isolated or 'marginalised' groups.

Over 300 participants contributed more than 400 stories over a period of 6 months.

The stories form a valuable & engaging local history of each neighbourhood area & have been collated into this Folio of Stories, available as a booklet or on the City of Port Phillip website:

http://www.port Phillip.vic.gov.au/mm_m_stories.html

HERITAGE REPORT

Our Heritage Officer, Peter Johnson provided this assistance to a member recently regarding "Terceira" House in Wellington Street, St Kilda...

Q. "... A couple of years ago, I enquired with your society about 54 Wellington Street, St Kilda circa 1880 in order to find out its name, but was unsuccessful in finding any details. By chance, a man came to my door today with an old postcard of the house, (photo attached). The only further details I have are the name Mrs. MANSON or MAUSON and the name of the house "TERCEIRA".

I would be delighted if you could provide me with any further information about the house or the original residents?

A. "Thank you for your enquiry & also the very interesting photograph of 'Terceira'. Unfortunately, due to limited resources, we are not able to carry out searches ourselves. What we can offer is some practical advice to assist you to carry out your own research.

.....I can tell you that your house was built in about 1870, based on its architectural style, particularly the pointed polychromatic

brick arches over the window, and the fact that the house does appear in the John Vardy maps of 1873 as property No.77 on Plan 1, North Ward. The owner/occupier was J Moody. He also owned three adjoining properties at nos 56, 58, & 60 Wellington Street (Vardy property nos 78-80).

To discover more about your house's history you need to search the **Sands McDougall Directories & St Kilda Rate books**. Both are available for viewing on microfilm at the St Kilda Library in the Local History Room, as are the **Vardy maps**. This room is usually kept locked so you will need to ask at the information desk for access. The rates rolls are difficult to use so you may need some guidance. If you do, you should contact **Kay Rowan, the Local History Librarian (tel: 9209 6558)**.

If you ever prepare a history, we would be most keen to obtain a copy. **The Society is gradually building up a collection of house & street histories** which will greatly assist researchers and our knowledge of the area in the future.

Please direct any heritage queries to our dedicated Heritage Officer, Peter Johnson

v: (+61 3) 9525-3696 e: prj@bigpond.net.au

Below: Mooneys Hotel, corner of Robe Street and Upper Esplanade from our upcoming publication on Hotels of St Kilda and South Melbourne.



St Kilda

World Heritage Site

The incredible island off the coast of Scotland - Part I

by Cliff Skinner



- The island of St Kilda lies 110 miles (180 kilometres) off the west coast of the Scottish mainland.
- Our own suburb in Melbourne is indirectly named after this remote and fascinating island.
- Our suburb is named after the schooner, *The Lady of St Kilda* which was frequently moored off our foreshore from 1841 onwards. The schooner was named after the island of St Kilda after the owner's wife visited the island in 1810.



Up until the beginning of the 19th Century, the island of St Kilda was relatively isolated. In fact, it has been estimated that the St Kildans had lived there for over 2,000 years.

But like so many wild and isolated parts of the world, the arrival of visitors to the island had a devastating effect, especially on the health of the islanders.

The early visitors were mainly missionaries & tourists who presumably came with good intentions. But the primitive culture of the St Kilda developed over centuries, could not withstand this intervention. Eventually, the population of the island dwindled dramatically & in 1930 the few remaining islanders were evacuated.

A sad end to a culture which had remained intact and isolated from the rest of the world for so long.



Looking something like *Bali Hai* from the film *South Pacific* the island of St Kilda looms out of the mist of the North Atlantic Ocean. Its massive, towering cliffs drop in parts for a thousand feet into the deep, cold waters below. It is a forbidding place, totally unlike our own comfortable suburb of St Kilda.



Members may remember this picture (at left) of the *St Kilda Parliament* which I included in an article in the *St Kilda Chronicle* a few years ago?

The men met like this every day to arrange the day's activities. A great deal of correspondence resulted from the publication of this picture.

I hope that this short article will whet your appetite to learn more about this fascinating and isolated island and our own historic connections with it...

References/acknowledgements

MacLean Charles. *Island on the Edge of the World*. Tom Stacey Ltd. Edinburgh, Scotland 1972
National Trust for Scotland
Authors own research material
Cooper, John Butler. *History of St Kilda*. Printers Propriety Limited. Melbourne 1931

Note: Cliff Skinner has been a long time member of SKHS & was formerly the Editor & Honorary Heritage Officer. This is the first of a series of articles that he will write about the fascinating Island of St Kilda.



St Kilda Historical Society

Free Public Events 2004

General Meetings at
2.30 pm.
Speakers start at 3pm
approximately

* = Meet at the St Kilda Library Community Room

FREE unless otherwise stated. Afternoon tea available. Agenda is subject to change – note advertisements in local papers. No RSVP, just turn up.

ALL WELCOME

JUNE 13*
Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.

RADICAL MELBOURNE (Vol 1 and 2)*

Sister and brother, Jill and Jeff Sparrow, work at the Trades Hall bookshop. Their alternative guidebook and history of Melbourne chronicles places where socialist, anarchic, anti-establishment, eccentric and even bizarre events have occurred since settlement.

JULY 11*
Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.

GEORGE TURNER – A LIFE

George Turner 1916- 1997, St Kilda resident, was one of the greatest influences on Australian science fiction as a critic, essayist and writer. His fourteen books won many awards included the Miles Franklin Prize. Well-known author Judith Buckrich speaks on the subject of her book on this inspiring Australian.

AUGUST 8*
Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.
Speaker 3.00 p.m.

SINGLE & FREE (preceded by SKHS AGM, doors opening 2.00 p.m)

What were the true characteristics of the women that pioneered Australia? Dr Elizabeth Rushen, Executive Director of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, discusses her recent book. 'Single & Free: Female Migration to Australia 1833-1837'.

SEPT 12*
Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.

ARCHIVES OF THE CITY OF PORT PHILLIP

Heather McCrae, COPP Archivist and Heritage Officer, explains the range of records held by council. Our historic collection in the dungeon under St Kilda library will also be open to the public for annual viewing & spring-cleaning after 3.00 p.m. The Dungeon is accessed via the underground car park roller door at the rear of the library in Duke Street 0408 894 724.

NOV 14*
Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.

UNDERGROUND MELBOURNE

There are 17,000 kilometres of wastewater drains under Melbourne. Our guest speaker from the Melbourne Cave Clan details the subterranean spaces under our city and the history of the Cave Clan's attempts to explore them

DEC 12
Sunday @ 2.30 p.m.
Venue to be
announced

ST KILDA HISTORICAL SOCIETY END-OF-YEAR CELEBRATION

