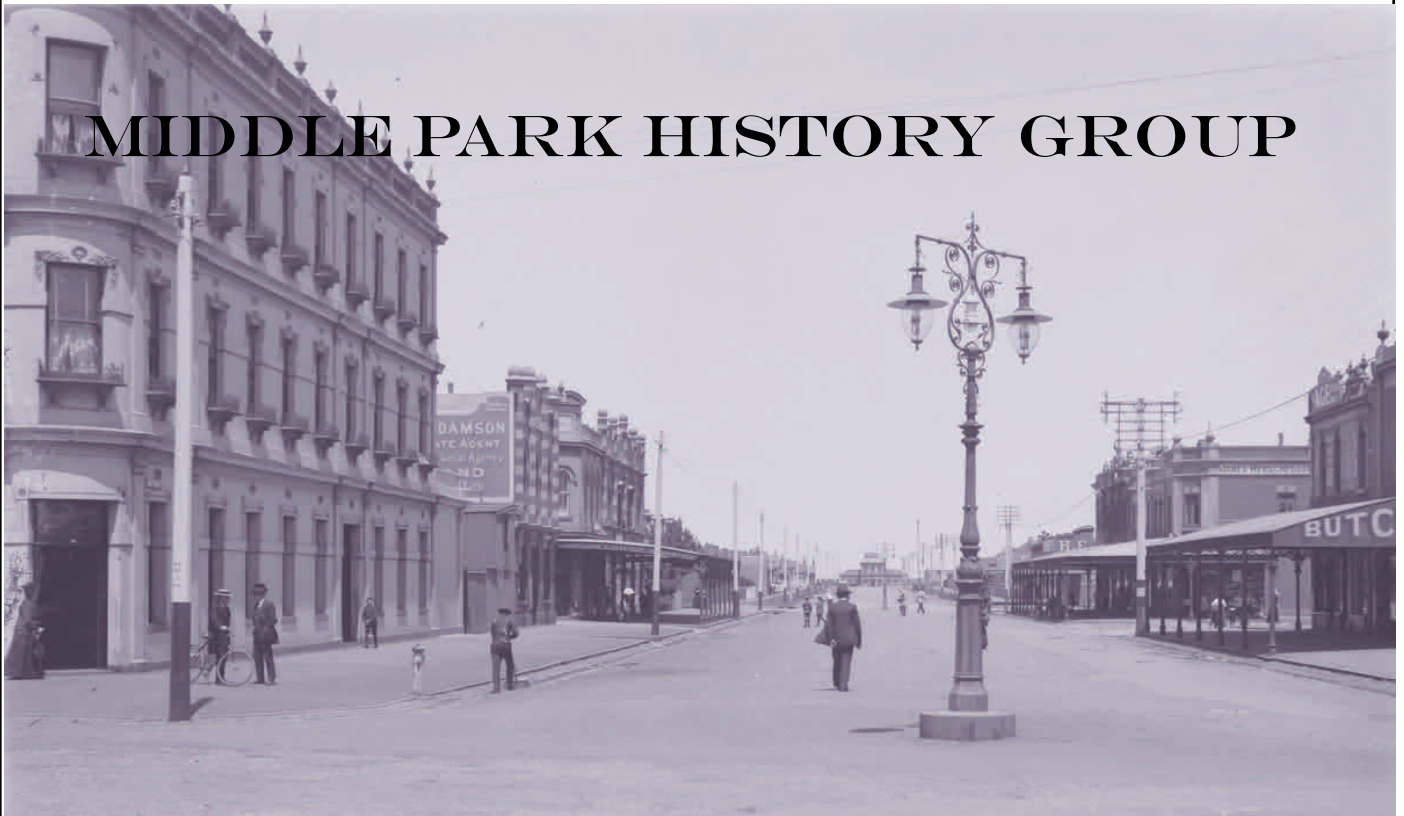


MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP



Editorial

In this issue we continue our regular series as before.

We have another article by Sonya Cameron on what was going on in Middle Park 100 years ago, this time about an individual covered in more detail in one of the three books published by MPHG.

Bruce Armstrong, who grew up in Middle Park through the 1920s–1940s, has committed his memoirs to paper. This is the sixth in a series of reminiscences from Bruce. We also have reminiscences from Colin Crawford who has lived and taught in the area for most of his life. Plus

another contribution by Dr Helen Light about life in her house during the post-WW 2 years.

Diana Phoenix has contributed an appreciation of the life of Mary Crean, a well known long-time Middle Park resident.

A new mystery object, has been contributed by an eagle-eyed reader. Have you spotted it in Middle Park? All will be explained in the next issue.

Gary Poore

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100 years ago

A VETERAN CHINESE.**DEATH AT MIDDLE PARK.**

In this country it is seldom indeed that the natural death of a Chinese is made the subject of special reference in the press, but exception is made in the instance recorded below, deceased being the first Chinese to land in Victoria, and being highly esteemed, as are his family, for his many outstanding good qualities.

At the age of 92 years, Mr. Louey Ah Mouey, who has been a colonist of Victoria for 67 years, died at his home at 16 Nimmo street, Middle Park, on Sunday.

A builder by trade, Mr. Ah Mouey was the first Chinese to land in Victoria, coming out from Canton in 1851 under contract to erect some buildings for Captain Glendinning, the master of the sailing vessel by which he travelled. It is claimed that he built the first houses that existed in South Melbourne and Williamstown.

Soon after his arrival here, he wrote to his brother in Canton to come to Victoria. The letter was intercepted in China, and it is assumed that this initiated the immigration of Chinese to Victoria.

Mr. Ah Mouey was a great mining investor and speculator, and in the fifties, with Chinese labor, he opened up many mines in the Yea district. After having been eight or ten years in Victoria, he could speak the English language fluently, and read and write excellently. As the result of his marriage in Victoria to a woman of his own nationality, Mr. Ah Mouey leaves seven sons, three daughters, and 12 grandchildren. The daughters and two sons are married. One son, Mr. Ling Ah Mouey, is a member of the legal profession in Melbourne, and another, Mr. M. H. Ah Mouey, is an architect, living in Middle Park. Both were well known in local sporting circles as cricketers of more than average skill. A grandson is employed as an electrical engineer in the Postmaster-General's Department. Six of the sons are in Melbourne, while the seventh is a retired merchant living in Hong Kong. One daughter is living in Victoria, and the other two in Calcutta and America. A sister is living in China.

Mr. Ah Mouey was well known in business circles, he having been a tea merchant and an importer and exporter, of 260 Swanston street.

His remains were interred in the Church of England portion of the Melbourne Cemetery on Monday afternoon.

The White Australia policy was introduced in 1901 to fight the immigration of non-white groups to Australia, particularly those of Asian descent. It is therefore noteworthy that an obituary should be written for a man of Chinese descent who died in May 1918. However, Louis Ah Mouy was a remarkable man who arrived in Victoria in 1851 and settled in Middle Park around 1884, first in Canterbury Road and then in Nimmo Street, where he was living at the time of his death. You can read a full account of the Ah Mouy family in the Middle Park History Group's book "*Middle Park, from swamp to suburb*"

Article from *The Record*, published at Emerald Hill, Saturday, 4 May 1918

Sonya Cameron

Mystery object?



Mary Crean

17 October 1914 – 28 January 2018

We were saddened to hear that Mary Crean, a notable life-long resident of Middle Park, died recently, aged 104. It is a sad loss to the local community.

Mary was born in 1914, a daughter of Albert and Isabella Findlay of 106 Harold Street, Middle Park, the house which later became her married home. She attended Middle Park Primary School, then Presbyterian Ladies College in East Melbourne, and later William Angliss College.

Beginning a life-time involvement in social work she volunteered at the Clarendon Kindergarten in South Melbourne, run by the Presbyterian Church. Her family worshipped at the Presbyterian Church in Richardson Street, and so began her strong participation there which continued until its closure in 1969. At this Church she met her future husband Frank Crean who was Superintendent of the Sunday School. They were married there in 1946. She became, in effect, an electorate officer as her husband entered Parliament as the Member for Prahran in 1945, then Member for Melbourne Ports in Federal Parliament in 1951.

Her son Simon, one of three boys, who also became a MP, described his mother's astute observations, her selflessness, her energy, and her community involvement in his eulogy at her funeral. Her activities were wide-ranging throughout the municipality of South Melbourne. She played a prominent role in the Freedom from Hunger campaign which initiated the doorknock as a method of raising funds, the Emergency Housekeeper Scheme and as Chairman of the South Melbourne Community Chest which was launched in 1946 to assist charities and community projects. Particular involvement relating to Middle Park included her church, the kindergarten in Mills Street and a Christmas fair in Armstrong Street in aid of Southport Hospital. She was invited to become Girl Guide

Commissioner, and also received an Australian Medal (AM).

As a memorial to Mary and Frank's community participation a children's playground now exists on the site of her church in Richardson Street, named the Frank and Mary Crean Reserve.

Mary and Frank spent their last few years together in an apartment on Queen's Road. Following his death in 2008 she moved to a nursing home.

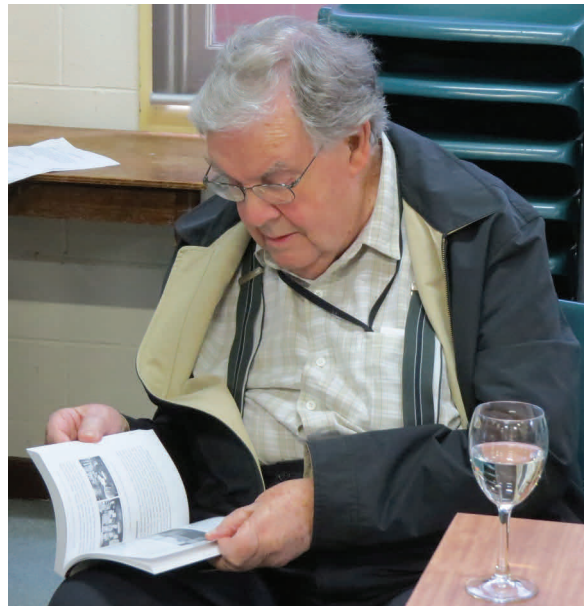
She was farewelled on 5 February 2018 at the Church of St Paul the Apostle, South Melbourne Uniting Church.

Diana Phoenix



Mary Crean, 1973, photo: SMH

This is the sixth of a series of collected memories from Bruce Armstrong (left, aged 92 years in 2016), a former resident of Middle Park. Bruce remembers an environment very different from what we now experience. Bruce has contributed a series of vignettes recounting his life. These have been assembled into chapters by the editor with Bruce's permission but the words remain largely his own – Gary Poore



Childhood, growing up and salad days in Middle Park. Chapter Six

B r u c e A r m s t r o n g

Going hungry

Repercussions of the 1929 Wall Street collapse began to bite hard in 1932. I was in my second year at Middle Park Primary school and clearly recollect kids scrounging scraps from rubbish bins, some wearing 'runners', a few without socks and skimpy clothes. A few boys wore knickers cut down from larger trousers and held up with old neck-ties. Little girls in thin cotton dresses and thread-bare cardigans stood around hugging themselves. Those from advantaged homes wore pull-overs and pinafores. A keen-eyed observer could discern the differences by the footwear. Polished/unpolished footwear usually announced the wearer's circumstances.

Teachers on yard-duty reported hungry kids to Head-master Robert Smith who was known to occasionally call a boy or girl to his office to receive three pence to go to Mr Fox's tuck-shop across Mills Street and buy a hot meat pie. Heads of state schools received a small annual disbursement for such purposes.

Entertainment for kids — flying kites

With a high rate of unemployment, entertainment was scarce and often improvised.

September is always Melbourne's windy month and at week-ends people flew homemade kites in Albert Park. Most were of traditional kite shape with long 'tails' made by tying ladies stockings together, a few were box-kites which didn't require tails. My brother Jack, then a callow youth of 17 emerging into his salad days, was a dab-hand at making and flying kites. Over time, he collected pieces of string which he aggregated into one length of about 100 metres. He then wound it into a criss-cross bundle on a 40 cm-long pointed stick. My sisters Jill and Zoe and I stood around watching the process. Jack was the taciturn type and to our excited questions, mumbled "never you mind".

He spread a large piece of brown paper on the kitchen table, over this he arranged two ribs of thin bamboo tied in the middle to form a cross.

The points of the sticks were connected by strong string pulled tight to give it shape. The brown paper was trimmed then folded over the string, and pasted with 'Clag' adhesive. Next day, with all dry, he applied a slack piece of string top to bottom and knotted in the middle for tethering to the long line. The tail was added last.

Weather permitting, we helped carry our creation through the rail underpass at the end of Langridge Street, into the park to find a place among other kite-flyers. That wasn't easy because there were many kites. Jack held the wound-up line and we took turns running against the wind with kite and tail in hand. Once air borne, Jack played out the line and we marvelled at how fast it soared. It shuddered and swooped, sometimes almost touching the ground. Jack was a master pilot and eventually announced it was time to send our messages. These were paper squares about 10 cm square with a 2 cm hole with our scrawled messages to "whoever lives up there". He passed the line through the holes and a sudden up-draft whisked them to the kite. For added fun, he tied the line to an ankle and we'd

walk into the wind dragging the kite. As a diversion, Jack pushed the sharpened end of the stick well into the soil, sitting back smugly saying "now go fly yourself".

If our kite became entangled with another, there'd be some cussing and a rush to sort it out. At the end of the time aloft, we hauled it in by slowly winding the line back onto the stick. Simple pleasure, inexpensive and - homemade. For some, it temporarily diverted attention from the harshness of the depression.

Entertainment — roaming the neighbourhood

We lived a short walk or three-penny tram ride from St Kilda with its Luna Park, Palais de Danse and Palais movie theatre. There was famous Fitzroy Street, assorted eateries and pubs along with charming 'ladies of the night' and their pimps (aka bludgers). Some dance-driven types were still thrashing around with the Charleston but many preferred to glide around doing the modern waltz or foxtrot where the partners held each other belly to belly; in both styles the girls seemed to dance backwards most



Not Bruce, but children with kites similar to those he describes at Box Hill, May 1959 (Museum Victoria collection, MM7871)

of the time. But the Great Depression was upon us and it cast a heavy pall on entertainment venues. However, the youth of the day, employed or not, resorted to old-fashioned ways of amusing themselves.

Some kids played 'nick nock' with the door-knockers of people's front doors. Tie a length of cotton to the knocker and retreat across the street or get up a tree. We thought that tame – our preferred annoying pranks would be totally unacceptable these days.

Whenever our gang was able to collectively raise two shillings and sixpence, we called at the boat-sheds located at the far north end of the lake. This gave us a one-hour hire of a large canoe or dinghy with canvas sails. We would visit the large island in the lake and inspect the World War One trophy howitzers – they were removed years later – and the island is out of bounds today. The exhilarating freedom we felt has to be imagined. Our parents never knew where we were, we often skipped lunch and arrived home ravenously hungry. A double story weather-board building on the lake road was surrounded by eight asphalted tennis courts. It had a tea room and confectionery shop on the ground floor and upstairs there was a dance-floor and manager's residence.

Beneath the green grass of Albert Park from the railway line to the lake it was discovered there was a thick layer of white sand. South Melbourne Council hit on the idea of removing and selling it for building and horticultural purposes. Starting at the St Kilda end, excavators dug and removed vast quantities of it and in the deep (about 2 metres) space, back-filled with garbage from the City of South Melbourne. For a fee, other municipalities also dumped there. In hot weather the area stank; it was a putrid eyesore and had colonies of migrating rats which crossed the rail line into homes. One of my little gang of mates had an air-rifle and we sometimes sat on the garbage heaps shooting the rodents as they went about their affairs. With the area top-dressed and settled, the playing fields restored, the rats retired and the stink gone, that part of Albert Park returned to what it always was – a

place for lovers to frolic undisturbed. No illumination because there were no street lights. Local larrikins referred to the area as 'the saddling paddock'.

During the early 1930s men and boys were able to swim au natural in the confines of the baths and there were notices on each side of the building telling other bathers not to approach within a certain distance. Gaps in the structure enabled boys to look into the baths. Male modesty? Inside was a long platform for sun-bathers to lay about like huge slugs, naked, reading, yarning or drinking tea served by 'Zack' who worked cleaning or running hot-sea baths. Some fetishists thought hot sea baths would cure anything. He was an opinionated know-all who liked to get around the streets in kilt and sporran. We teased him with the eternal question 'Hi Zack – what do keep up there?' After the cyclone, that facility was sadly missed by the sun-bathers, life was never the same.



Children at Albert Park Lake, c. 1966. Photo: Dennis Major, SLV

Almost the original street kids

Colin Crawford

They were adventurous days- the 1940s and the early 1950s- and we were the 'street kids' because the streets and environs of South Melbourne formed our playground.

Memories ...

We kicked a paper football, or, if lucky enough, a paper football covered with part of an old sock. We swapped cards, which came with cigarette packets (pre-war) or Hoadley chocolates, or flicked them against a wall- winner takes all.

For many years, the St Vincent Gardens were fenced, and the gates were locked at sunset. Under the cover of darkness (Dad worked night-shift- he didn't know), my brother and I would clamber over the fence and climb trees. One particular pine tree in the Works Depot had a rope attached, so we took turns at being 'Tarzan'.

Lamp posts made good wickets for street cricket, and we were rarely interrupted by passing cars. Some street intersections had covered storm-water drains. We would climb into them and hopefully resurface diagonally opposite. The thought of unexpected thunderstorms didn't cross our mind.

A test of courage was to walk across the spiked parapets of the Park St railway bridge, or stand in the recesses below the bridge as the train whizzed by. My older brother sometimes led me astray. I didn't mind.

Saturdays were fun as we hitched a ride to help (???)the fuel and ice merchants, on their tray trucks. This sometimes resulted in a long walk home. Again, under the cover of darkness and in the winter fogs, we would hitch a ride along Ferrars St on the back of Sam Loon's horse drawn fruit cart returning from the Vic wholesale market- until he flicked his whip in our direction.

At home, the kitchen table was complemented with yabbies from the Albert Park Lake. Meat, cotton thread and a home-made wire and nylon stocking net formed part of the catching strategy.

Mussels from the pylons of Kerferd Rd pier were also in good supply.

A winter's night saw our family huddled around a small open fire. Coke, purchased from the gas works and transported home in a hand-cart, provided ample warmth.

The Middle Park Old Buffers Carnival was an annual Queen's Birthday Weekend highlight. Local male characters comically dressed up and raised money for the Prince Henry Hospital in St Kilda Road (now site of the Melbournian). The district's newsagents fought for the honour of having the fastest paper-boys, decided by a relay race along Armstrong St, from the beach to Canterbury Rd. The Parade along the same street was a colourful treat.

A Saturday evening feature was selling newspapers by the Albert Park railway station, and stealing a ride on the Bridport St crossing gates. As sub-agents of our mate Lindsay, we would venture into wedding receptions in the St Silas Church Hall (now replaced by a service station). Football enthusiasts would be eager to buy the Sporting Globe, the popular pink pages, to check their team's fortunes. A piece of sponge cake or a small tip rewarded our forays to spread the news.

Our Dad was a St Kilda supporter. It was a long walk through the park to their home ground to witness the Lakeside Premiership. It was an even longer walk home for us young South Melbourne fans when we lost.

Sam Wah's Chinese Cafe and the fore-runner to Andrew's Hamburgers in Bridport St were popular haunts for food top-ups. Communism and Ralph Gibson were on the move, and the mini-park, opposite the Albert Park Hotel, the venue for Friday night political gatherings became known as Red Square. The Kinema and Park Picture theatres nearby were popular- particularly the children's matinees of a Saturday afternoon.

Summer time saw us flock to Stubb's Baths, near the end of Victoria Avenue. Inflated tyre tubes and sunburn provided highs and lows. What has happened to chilblains -the scourge of winter?

The corner grocery store or milk-bar were important and friendly service was prevalent. Butter meted out from a 56 pound block, a wire slicer for cheese and bottled beer, delivered to licensed grocers in 24 capacity wicker bamboo crates come to mind. A couple of local wine bars with swing doors catered for those who preferred port or sherry.

The War Years (1939–1945) left their mark. Coupons were needed to buy petrol, clothing, meat, sugar, tea and butter. Charcoal burners were attached to many cars. House and car lights had to be dimmed to limit detection from enemy planes.

American sailors from their warships berthed at Port Melbourne would march or meander on nearby streets. Part of their entertainment was to watch local kids scramble for their throw-away coins, chewing gum and cigarettes. A sailor's hat was a prized souvenir. Later, I came to understand the Aussie male description of the US servicemen- "overpaid, over sexed and over here". The MCG and the Lake Oval became military camps, as did part of the Middle Park Bowling Club.

During the War Years, trenches (air-raid shelters) were dug along part of the perimeter of the St Vincent Gardens. These became particularly attractive and challenging after rain. One activity was to mould balls of clay and toss them up hoping to make them stick to the veranda ceiling. Parents- not happy! 1945. The good news. The War was over. The bad news. Carlton defeated South Melbourne in a blood-bath Grand Final- on their ground, and they thumped our young Ron Clegg. I'm still upset.

Life those days was simple and fun. No drugs, the occasional fag (cigarette) and a dose of sport, and we were content- except our football team found victory elusive. It was always "Next year!" NB Some names have been changed.

Author Biography

Colin Crawford was born in South Melbourne in 1936 and has lived locally all of his life. He is married with three adult children. As a teacher he worked in local schools including Middle Park Primary School where he was Principal. His interests include travel, the arts and *sport*, particularly athletics and football.

Colin spoke about his life, especially his time as Principal of Middle Park Primary School at the MPHG meeting in December 2017.



THE ROSE SERIES P. 13108

THE MIDDLE PARK STATE SCHOOL, VIC.

Photo of Middle Park State School (sometime between 1920 and 1954), one of the Rose Stereograph Co. postcard series (SLV H32492/7941)

A first home in a free country

Dr Helen Light AM

One day in the early 1990s I came home to our house at 290 Richardson Street, Middle Park where we have lived since 1981. There were two women in our front garden peering into the bedroom window, so I approached and asked if I could help them. One asked me if I lived in this house to which I answered yes.

She explained that she was showing her friend her first home in a free country. She had first lived in this house, having come with her husband and son from the Displaced Persons Camps after World War 2. She was Jewish and the other woman, her daughter-in-law, was known to me as a volunteer at the Jewish Museum of Australia where I worked at the time.

She told me our home at the time was a boarding house, home to a chain migration of Bratislavan Jews who had arrived in Australia in the late 1940s either from the camps or as escapees from Communism. Four families lived in this house at a time, an average of 16 people. Most of the people who lived in our home, had either known each other or had known of each other in Bratislava.

Most families lived in this boarding house for one or two years, until they had made enough money and contacts to seek a more comfortable dwelling. They saw this period as a short transition period for them during their acclimatisation to this new land.

To generate an income several clothes making businesses were started in the house, with women working treadle machines set-out along the corridor, she had fond memories of *Seders* (Passover meals). But most of all it was of the sense of freedom in a land far from the "killing fields" of the *Shoah* (Holocaust).

Later my husband and I learned that many people we knew had actually first lived in this Middle Park house. Later we arranged a reunion

of some of those Bratislavan Jews who had passed through this house. It seems about 25 families had resided here for various lengths of time. We filmed the reunion and learned a lot about the history of their immigration, and particularly the first settlement of these Jewish survivors.

The story of the residents of our home is but a microcosm of all immigrants and refugees particularly typical of the ~30,000 Jewish refugees who found a haven in Australia after the horrors of the Shoah.

Jews lived in Czechoslovakia since at least 906 CE and, over time, experienced periods of acceptance and periods of discrimination and persecution. At the time of the founding of the Czech Republic in 1918, after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Jews numbered 356,830 and made up 2.5% of the Czech population. This was a "golden age" in a democracy which encouraged cultural pluralism.

After Czechoslovakia was occupied by the German army in 1938, about 70,000 Czech Jews escaped shortly before the war. Of those who remained, about 250,000 Czech Jews were murdered in the Holocaust, and about 26,000 survived, most of who left as soon as possible, often to Israel or the USA. Others came to Australia after Czechoslovakia became a Communist country in 1948. Many came to Australia because they were easily able to obtain visas. According to those who lived at 260 Richardson Street, they also chose Australia, because it was the furthest place they could imagine escaping to from Europe.

Most the residents of 260 Richardson St were very poor and were adjusting to living in a new country with a different culture. But they were young, alive and free. Many were religious and enjoyed living and celebrating their Judaism.

They reminisced about *Seders* in the house, about walking to Synagogue at Montefiore Homes in St Kilda Road. Some of the children went from Richardson Street School to Mt Scopus College when it began in St Kilda Road.

There were several such boarding houses in Middle Park, because of its proximity to the Port area and also to the General Motors Holden Factory in Port Melbourne, where so many post-war refugees were employed.

The women said that 260 Richardson Street was owned by “a good man” because he, unlike most owners of boarding houses, let rooms to people with children. The man who lived in the house for the longest from 1948, became responsible for the keys, for collecting the rent and for caretaking. For this he was given the “nicest” apartment in return. The rent was 4 guineas a week. At that time most residents earned £5 per week and in most cases, the husband and wife both worked.

Every family had one room and access to a shower and a small kitchen. One of the girls described how the beds in the room had to be packed up every morning so that the family could eat, live and work in the same room. Her mother worked at Electrolux, but she also sewed, as did many of the other women. She made shirts and also *kittels* and other religious items. Apparently many a *schmatte* business (clothing trade) was started in the corridors or on the floor at 260 Richardson St.

We are so delighted that our house has this history, and that it gave these people a good start, a safe home in a safe country. It was the same with my own and my husband’s parents when they arrived here from Germany, Poland and the Netherlands. They first settled in houses that provided them with havens after the storm. But this house, our home, gave these people a good start, a safe home in a safe country.



Erica Heino and friend at 260 Richardson Street (early 1950s) Photo with permission, H. Light



Heino family in front room, 260 Richardson Street Photo with permission, H. Light

MPHG activities

Monthly meetings

February 2018

Brian Carter, spoke on his role as Gardens Administrator in the City of South Melbourne in the mid- to late 1970s. Brian, among other things, was influential in planning and creating our urban forest, Canterbury Road. Brian entertained a largely unaware audience with stories of his pioneering activities during this period, including creating a treescape at Middle Park Primary School, facilitating outdoor eating on footpaths, employing the first women gardeners in local government, replacing asphalt with plantings, his work on anti-litter campaigns, planting fruit trees in public places, founding the South Melbourne Garden Club, initiating a small organic garden in Kerferd Road and community gardens elsewhere, reviving St Vincent's Garden into a public place, planting trees in laneways and indigenous plants along the beach, and more. Middle Park and surrounding areas have much to thank Brian for.

April 2018

Meyer Eidelson, spoke about the life of the convict William Buckley who lived among the Aborigines between 1803, when he escaped from the first settlement in Victoria, and 1835 when Melbourne was settled by Europeans. Meyer added to the facts of Buckley's life by considering the social conditions of the times and how the indigenous people and colonial settlers would have regarded his 32-year experience with the Aborigines and later with the settlers.

MPHG committee

The Executive committee meets every second month at the Mary Kehoe Centre.

The small but active Executive has been busy over the last few months. Some of their key activities have been to continue a project of collecting and indexing all maps and photos relevant to Middle Park. Most of these photos are public property (e.g., SLV, PROV) but some are private photos that have been donated to MPHG. So, if any member has in their possession any family photos which relate to Middle Park, the Group would be happy to receive them (or a copy).

We are also developing a series of free self-guided walking tours of aspects of Middle Park. When published, we hope to distribute them via various outlets such as libraries, shops, etc. Another significant project is the publication of a book which tells the story of the family which built *Somerset*, the house now known as the Mary Kehoe Centre. And, of course we are presenting our bi-monthly speakers at meetings the at Baptist Church to which all are welcome.

All these activities keep the executive members very busy, and they would welcome additional help. So, if you think you would like to be a member of the Executive, or even just assist by undertaking a specific research task, we would love to hear from you. As part of our efforts to engage members, we are hoping to invite some members to a social get-together to explain, over a glass of wine, or a coffee, how you can assist – even in some small way.

MPHG meeting schedule 2018

Monday 4 June 2018

Janet Bolitho and Margaret Bride, Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society, will speak about Mapping Port Melbourne's past. Using historic maps and aerial photos they are tracking changes to Port Melbourne and Fisherman's Bend.

Monday 6 August 2018

Brian Hegarty, Growing up in Middle Park/Albert Park. Bryan will be providing an insight into growing up in our local area as during the 50s, 60s and early 70s through the eyes of a child and teen

All meetings are at 7:30 pm at the Albert Park Baptist Church Hall, corner Kerferd Road and Richardson Street (entry through OFFICE door in Richardson Street)

Your MPHG committee

President:	Max Nankervis
Vice-President:	Meyer Eidelson
Secretary:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Sonya Cameron
Liaison officer:	Diana Phoenix
Committee member:	Annette Robinson
Oral history:	Annette Robinson