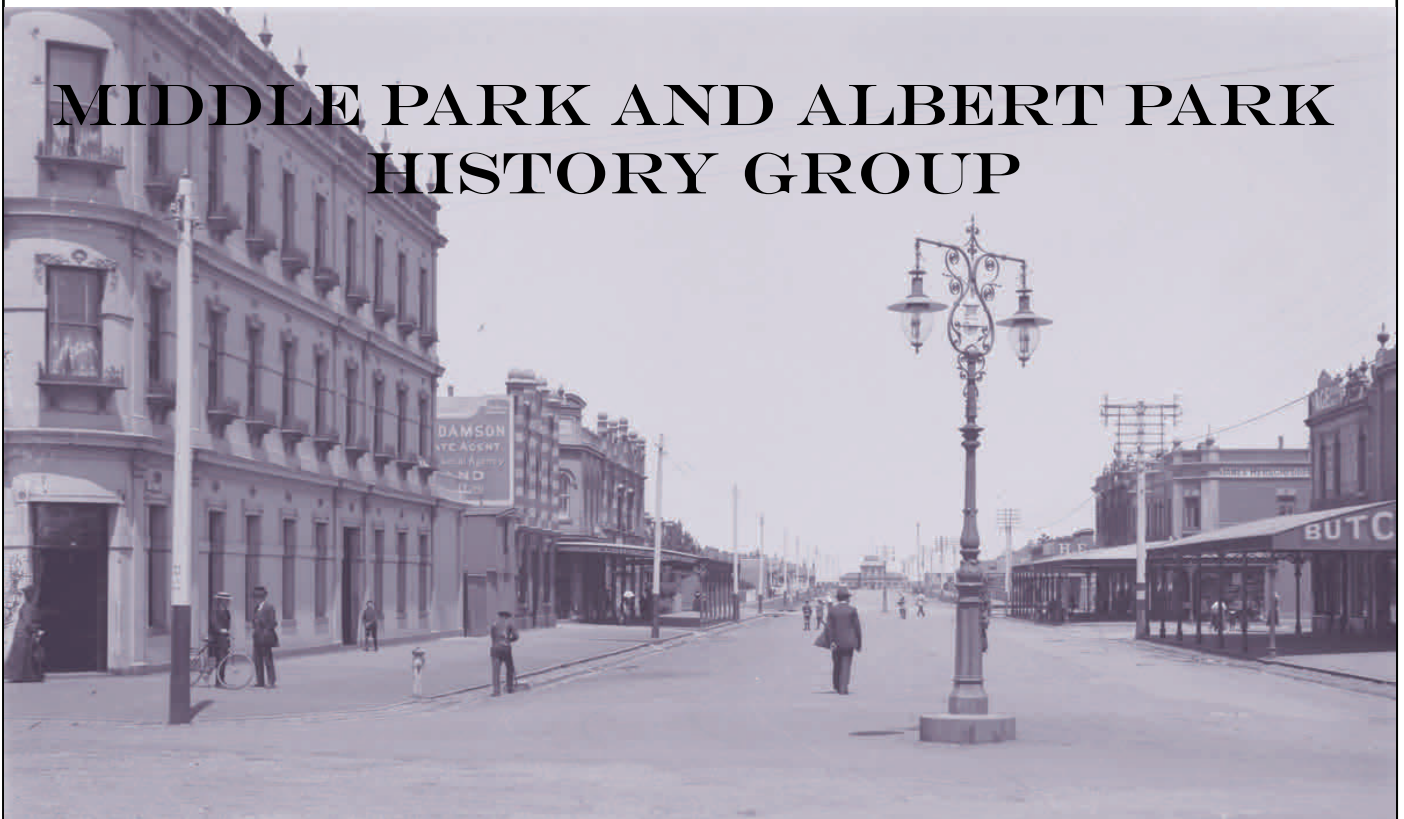


MIDDLE PARK AND ALBERT PARK HISTORY GROUP



Editorial

This issue of our newsletter contains, as usual, news from Sonya Cameron about what was happening locally 100 years ago and notice about our next meeting on 10 November. Nadia Wright has written the third of three articles on local police stations, none of which exist now. This article concentrates on what kept policemen busy then. And President Eidelson has used his report to summarise the lives of two (related) politicians residing and celebrated in Middle Park. We welcome two new

members of the MPAPHG committee, Jenny Cass and Sue Joyner, who put their hands up at our last AGM. Lastly, we say goodbye to one of our foundation members, Max Nankervis, who contributed so much about the built environment to newsletters and books.

Gary Poore

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President's Report

Frank and Simon Crean: Australia-wide voices from Middle Park and Albert Park

Frank Crean, 'the quiet voice of reason'

Frank and Mary Crean Reserve is located across the road from Middle Park Primary school, between Mills Street and Wright Street. Frank Crean was a former Federal treasurer and deputy prime minister from 1972 to 1974. He was born in Hamilton, Victoria, in 1916 and died in 2008 aged 92. Simon Crean, his son, rose to become Leader of the Federal Opposition.

When asked how he wished to be remembered, Frank Crean replied, "As the one who did what he could, when he could." Modest yet confident, he considered himself "the best qualified" treasurer since Federation and often served as the quiet voice of reason within Gough Whitlam's turbulent cabinet.

Crean's parents were Labor supporters in Hamilton where his mother, Alison, had been a teacher, and his father, John, worked as a miner and bicycle builder. The family read Dickens and National Geographic and were devoted Presbyterians. Crean's sympathy for the underdog began when he saw the public shaming of unemployed "sussos."

Devouring the books

Confined to bed at 13 with rheumatic fever, he devoured books from a neighbour active in the Labor Party and Australian Workers Union – his first exposure to leftist ideas. A gifted student, he attended Melbourne Boys High and joined the Taxation Department, studying accountancy at night. By 19 he was a fellow of the Australian Society of Accountants, later earning degrees in commerce and arts from the University of Melbourne.

Joining the ALP in 1942, he was endorsed for Albert Park in 1945, winning narrowly but losing in 1947. After working as a tax consultant in Middle Park, he became MLA for Prahran and later federal member for Melbourne Ports, a seat he held for 26 years. He married Mary Findlay in 1946. They raised three sons, David, Simon and Stephen, and lived their lives in Melbourne's inner south.

Crean became Labor's principal economic spokesman, advising leaders from Ben Chifley to H.V. Evatt. His deep fiscal knowledge and diligence earned him respect across party lines. Though never



Frank Crean (undated)

flamboyant, he was thoughtful and principled, often resisting populist impulses within his party.

In Canberra, Crean's modesty stood out amid larger political egos. He was a founding member of the Christian fellowship and known for his plain habits – dining sparingly and staying at the Kurrajong Hotel.

An uneasy Treasurer

When Labor finally took power in 1972, Whitlam made him treasurer. But their partnership was uneasy: Whitlam's grand visions clashed with Crean's fiscal caution. Crean believed he was marginalised for insisting on discipline. "I had 23 ministers who each thought he could spend the total budget," he later quipped. After his second budget, Whitlam replaced him with Jim Cairns, moving Crean to trade. In 1975 he briefly served as deputy prime minister before the government's dismissal. He later remarked that the Khemlani loans affair "would never have happened if I had remained treasurer."

Retiring in 1977 after three decades in parliament, Crean remained largely overlooked in political memoirs. Yet his careful stewardship and moral steadiness helped shape a more pragmatic Labor Party.

A reformer without flash or ego, Crean's quiet integrity bridged the idealism of the 1940s and the managerial realism of later Labor governments.

Simon Crean: Labor's steady hand

In the quiet, tree-lined streets of Middle Park, a young Simon Crean absorbed politics the way other kids absorbed football. His father, Frank Crean, Gough Whitlam's treasurer and later deputy prime minister, filled the kitchen with debates about fairness, budgets, and the business of helping people. From that table emerged a future Labor leader who prized decency and diligence.

Born on 26 February 1949, Simon was the middle of three sons to Frank and Mary Crean. His brothers, David and Stephen, also pursued public service – one in Tasmanian politics, the other in the public sector. Simon attended Melbourne High, then Monash University, earning degrees in law and economics.

From the Shop Floor to the Summit

Crean's public life began in the trade union movement, where he gained a reputation as a thoughtful negotiator. After university, he joined the Storemen and Packers Union (SPU), rising to general secretary in 1979. Calm, precise, and unflappable, Crean listened first and spoke second – rare in industrial politics.

By 1981, he was vice-president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), and in 1985 became its president, stepping into a role once held by Bob Hawke. Crean helped shape the Prices and Incomes Accord, a pact trading wage restraint for social progress. Respected on both sides, he became the bridge between workers and government.

Into Parliament

In 1990, Crean entered the House of Representatives for the safe Labor seat of Hotham. Hawke appointed him Minister for Science and Technology, recognising his intellect and discipline. He later held portfolios including Primary Industries and Energy and Employment, Education and Training, championing the idea that education and industry policy should work hand in hand.



Simon Crean (undated)

After Labor's 1996 defeat, Crean remained in opposition. He lost a bid for deputy leadership but persevered. By 2001, after another electoral loss, he became Leader of the Opposition, a steady hand who hoped to rebuild the party.

A Reluctant Warrior

Crean's leadership arrived in turbulent times. With John Howard's government strong and the nation still processing September 11, Crean brought integrity, not showmanship. He opposed Australia's involvement in the Iraq War, arguing that loyalty to allies didn't mean blind obedience.

Internal speculation about his leadership grew. In 2003, he called a leadership spill himself and won, but the pressure never eased. Later that year, he resigned, citing a lack of colleague confidence – a rare act of selfless political judgement.

The Workhorse Returns

Crean stayed in Parliament. After Labor's 2007 victory, he became Minister for Trade under Kevin Rudd, representing Australia in Asia and Europe and strengthening ties with Vietnam and Singapore. Under Julia Gillard, he served as Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, later moving to Regional Development, Local Government, and the Arts – portfolios reflecting his belief in culture and

regional opportunity.

Loyal to Gillard, he shocked colleagues in 2013 by urging a leadership spill to resolve internal conflict. When Rudd declined, Gillard sacked him for “disloyalty.” It was a harsh end for a minister who had always tried to steady the party.

Four Prime Ministers, One Steady Voice

By retirement in 2013, Crean had served as a minister under four Labor prime ministers, Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard, the first to do so since the 1940s. Over 23 years in Parliament, he remained principled, polite and pragmatic.

Family tragedy marked his life. His brother Stephen disappeared while skiing in 1985; his body wasn’t found for two years. Yet Simon’s empathy deepened. Though his electorate was in Melbourne’s southeast, his heart never strayed far from Middle Park and Albert Park, where values of community, fairness and service were instilled.

Life Beyond Politics

After retiring, Crean remained active: chairing the Australian Livestock Exporters Council, Australia–Korea Business Council and European Australian Business Council, and serving on boards including Linfox and Luna Park Melbourne. He returned to academia as associate professor at Deakin University,

leading its Advanced Manufacturing Group, and later became Deputy Chancellor of Monash University.

A mentor to younger politicians, Crean was admired for speaking truth with warmth. “Simon didn’t need to be the loudest in the room,” one colleague recalled. “He was the one everyone listened to when the noise stopped.”

Legacy of a Quiet Reformer

Crean’s career was defined not by flamboyance but by integrity. He modernised union relations, shaped trade policy, and strengthened Australia’s international ties. When he died suddenly on 25 June 2023, aged 74, tributes poured in from across the spectrum. In 2024, he was posthumously appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia, a fitting tribute to a life of service.

From Middle Park to Albert Park, from union halls to Cabinet tables, Simon Crean remained true to the values that shaped him: fairness, compassion and quiet courage. In an era of noise, he was the calm in the storm.

Meyer Eidelson

President

Sources: Australian 3 December 2008, p 11; Labor Australia; Wikipedia

Vale Max Nankervis 8 October 1944 — 8 September 2025

Max Nankervis, a foundation member of the Middle Park History Group (now Albert Park and Middle Park History Group), peacefully passed away on 8 September 2025 at the age of 80. Max became involved in the establishment of the Middle Park and Albert Park History Group (MP&APHG) where he contributed in shaping the Group's governance and objectives. Max contributed significantly to its quarterly newsletters between 2013 and 2016, and to its second book on Middle Park. He wrote several articles on Middle Park house styles and a series of five articles on 'Architectural oddities in Middle Park'. He also dedicated articles to iron lace and wooden decoration on houses in Middle Park. His interest went beyond places where people lived to individuals – he wrote an article in 2016 entitled 'Fraudsville – 50 Canterbury Road' about a gentleman who lived there. He wrote about 'Social Changes and Early Development in Middle Park' in the third book about Middle Park.

Max became president of the MPHG between 2016 and 2018.

On behalf of the City of Port Phillip and the Port Phillip U3A and as a respected historian, Max led several walks over many years highlighting historic aspects of local neighbourhoods, Max's vast history knowledge was enhanced by his profession as a town-planning lecturer. With this background, Max involved himself in numerous planning schemes ranging from the adverse impact of traffic caused by the construction of the Westgate Bridge to insensitive housing development that disregarded the local heritage character. It was in this area where Max generously helped many community people in



opposing planning applications that adversely impacted on them, such as overshadowing and invasion of privacy.

As a long-time resident for over 50 years, Max was a well-known identity. You would have noticed Max chatting with his friends on Wednesday mornings, enjoying a coffee while solving the world's problems. This group known as 'Las Tertulias', has currently been meeting for over 22 years, now outside the Armstrong St Food Store in Middle Park.

The MP&APHG expresses sincerest condolences to Max's wife Julie, son Liam and daughter Tegwen.

John Stirling

Inaugural President

Middle Park and Albert Park History Group

100 years ago – August 1925

Sonya Cameron

For the past almost thirty years many residents of Albert Park and Middle Park have complained about the disturbance caused by the annual international motor car race, the Australian Grand Prix, held at Albert Park Lake. One hundred years ago, residents' complaints about the Lake were more localised – the grazing of horses.

Cattle and horses had been allowed to graze in the Reserve since the 1850s. However, from 1909 cattle were banned from the Park, but horses were still allowed – much to the annoyance of golfers and cricketers and many residents. There were also concerns that in summer there was not enough grass for the horses and this is reflected in this article, which is a response to letters regarding animal cruelty that had been published in the newspapers.

Horses were still grazed in parts of the park until the early 1950s but rights were gradually withdrawn as the horses were interfering with the various sporting activities.

HORSES IN ALBERT PARK.

Allegations of Cruelty Denied.

From the curator of the Albert Park reserve the secretary of the trustees of the reserve, the chief clerk of the Lands department (Mr. H. O. Allan), has received a report in reply to statements made by Mr. F. Couper Smith, of East St. Kilda, who, in a letter published this week, said that disgraceful cruelty was being inflicted on horses running in Albert Park. The paddocks, Mr. Smith stated, were stocked with three times their carrying capacity, there was practically no feed left, and eight or nine horses had been shot recently to end their sufferings.

Mr. Allan said yesterday that in his report the curator denied those statements. To prevent the park from becoming overstocked, for some weeks all applications for permission to put additional horses there had been declined. Mr. Wilmott, inspector of the Society for the Protection of Animals, had visited the park and shot five animals, two of which were "strays" that had somehow entered the park. Many horses in the park were hand-fed at all seasons. Doubtless the cold weather was affecting all the animals grazing in the open. When Mr. Latham, the secretary to the Society for the Protection of Animals, visited the park, the curator gave him every assistance. Horses had been left in the park by their owners for three or four years and paid for on account of sentimental reasons, without having been taken out once, and as they grew old and feeble they had to be destroyed.

Argus (Melbourne), Saturday 1 August 1925, page 33

Murder, mayhem and much more: a policeman's lot in Albert Park and Middle Park

Nadia Wright

The small police forces based in Albert Park and Middle Park were kept on their toes – quite literally as they pounded their beats, hot-footed it to incidents and later pedalled furiously to answer calls for assistance. They dealt with murders, burglaries, arson, drownings, scams, suicides, domestic violence, assaults, thefts – large and small, road accidents, drunken drivers, abandoned, neglected or missing children, cruelty to animals, and creating a public nuisance. It seems that not much has changed. This article looks at some of the more interesting and unusual cases the police handled, some of which made the news interstate.

Being seaside suburbs, there were a number of deaths by drowning. While the Albert Park police retrieved bodies off Kerferd Pier, the Middle Park police recovered them from the local beach – the result of murder, accident or suicide.

Suicide was a criminal offence until 1958 and those who attempted it were duly arrested. However, some drownings were accidental. In January 1890, fourteen-year old Violet Nelson was collecting seaweed on steps of Kerferd Pier when she slipped and fell into the water. Despite the efforts of a young man who jumped in and attempted to save her, she drowned.

DROWNED AT MIDDLE PARK.

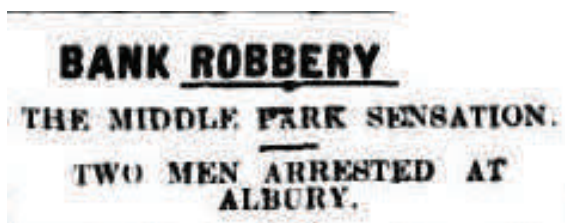
Joseph George Dixon Bowman, aged 18 years, musician, of 105 Erskine street, Middle Park, was drowned while bathing at the Middle Park beach on Friday night.

Argus 14 November 1927

In Middle Park in 1897 Henry Bennett, a dairyman, fell from his horse while bathing it in the bay; being unable to swim he drowned. Constables Willett and Foster dragged the waters for a day before finding his body. The police had the traumatic task of locating and fetching bodies, even using a grappling iron – and then escorting them to the morgue. There was no counselling for officers in those days.

At the other side of the suburbs, gruesome deaths occurred on the railway line leading to St Kilda. In August 1901 Senior Constable Williams picked up the mutilated body of a man run over by the train while in 1903 Senior Constable Lithgow gathered up the mangled remains of another corpse from the railway tracks. A policeman's lot was indeed not always a happy one.

There was a range of thefts – from that of the coir mat at the front door of the Albert Park station to a brazen bank heist in Middle Park in 1917. On that occasion, Angus Murray and Robert Bennett bound and gagged Mr Brooke, the teller at the English, Scottish and Australian bank in Canterbury Road – only 100 yards away from the police station, making off with some £541. Although Senior Constable Waldron and Constable Shergold were quickly on the scene, the suspects had fled in a horse and cart. They were apprehended two days later at Albury and duly charged with armed robbery. The audacious and carefully planned robbery made headlines interstate, and earned the culprits 15-year prison sentences.



Daily Telegraph (Launceston) 20 September 1917

As Sonya Cameron described in the July newsletter, Dowsett's drapery in Armstrong Street was robbed 12 times within 20 years. Entering by a range of devious means, the thieves made off with goods worth hundreds of pounds.

In 1925 the final bell heralded mayhem at a football match at Middle Park between Stony Park and the West Melbourne Ramblers. Disgruntled at the result, some spectators attacked the umpire. Fists and beer bottles flew and even revolvers were flourished. Sergeant Healey and Constable Poore intervened,

stopping the fighting and then chasing after the ringleaders, whom they arrested and charged at the Middle Park station.

FOOTBALL FIGHT.
REVOLVERS FLOURISHED.
Sensation in Middle Park.

Argus 31 August 1925

On a lighter note, in 1911 Constable Cuthbert, the watchhouse keeper at South Melbourne, began beat duty at Albert Park where he hoped 'to find the fresh sea breeze more stimulating than the stuffiness of the watchhouse'¹. He found a little more than he had bargained for. One of his first tasks was to arrest a bather for behaving in an offensive manner. The man had been swimming, and once ashore had removed his costume to change into his clothes, thus committing the offence – witnessed by Cuthbert. The arrested bather was fined 10/- or one day in jail.

Shortly afterwards, three extra constables were posted on beach duty during fine weather to deter other unacceptable behaviour. This included the 'screeching and yelling' of men and women after midnight, and men 'rushing along the foreshore contrary to regulation' causing accidents to female bathers. Finally, there were the hooligans who set up empty bottles along the sea wall and took pot shots at them leaving shattered glass.

With the advent of the motor car, and more powerful ones, came the crime of speeding. In 1920 it was reported that in the past 12 months Sergeant McGlade from Albert Park and his three constables had collected £440 in fines – mainly for speeding – a 'very good record' concluded the press. No doubt a number of fines were for motorists who broke the speed limit along Beaconsfield Parade which was then 12 mph (20 km/h). Even the magistrate commented that such a limit was out of touch with the times.

The police also showed kindness and compassion. In 1889 Constable Heffernan and Constable Halpin from Albert Park along with the Middle Park police, were hoodwinked by a well-presented young lad who claimed to have fled a brutal father. Police from both

stations spent hours trying to locate the boy's home. Finally, Constable Kennedy took him home to spend the night with his boys. But the next morning the boy's brother arrived at Albert Park Station, scotching the lad's story, explaining that he had run away from home after playing truant at school.

Above all, it was murder which captured the public's imagination. Five cases in particular made headlines across Australia.

In January 1897 Alexander Quinn was charged with the wilful murder of his wife the previous November. It turned out that she was still married to her first husband. Quinn claimed she tried to shoot herself but failed, so he shot her, and then himself.

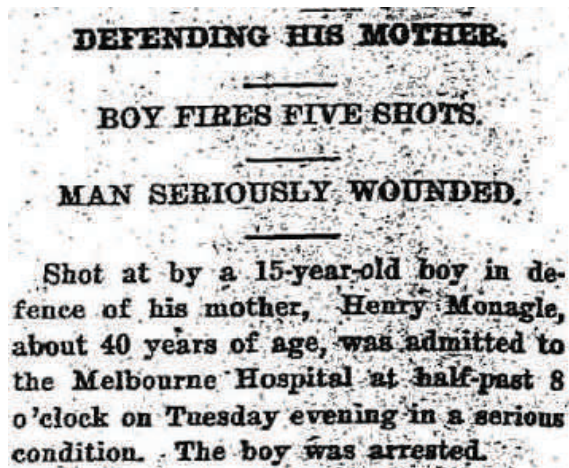
In 1911 there was the sensational case of Joseph Pfeiffer charged with the murder of his young sister-in-law Florence Whitely. She had complained to the police that he had been harassing her, and after the police spoke to him, he promised to reform. He did not. A few days later he shot Florence at point blank range – supposedly due to unrequited passion. Pfeiffer was found guilty and hanged on 12 April 1912, the press detailing his final hours.



Age 13 December 1911

A murder in February 1920 aroused much sympathy for the killer – a 16-year-old boy who shot the man who had beaten up his mother. The boy was William Pfeiffer (presumably the son of the aforementioned Joseph). Apparently, Henry Mongale, who had been in a relationship with Mrs Pfeiffer had brutally assaulted her, and not for the

first time, so William grabbed a revolver and shot him. After retiring for ten minutes, the jury found him not guilty.



Argus 11 February 1920

The most sensational and controversial murder occurred when John Kerr a well-known radio announcer was charged with murdering 20-year-old Beth Williams on Albert Park Beach in 1949. Known as the 'Beach Murder' case it captivated the public and the case went through three trials. A local resident had discovered Beth's body about 5 a.m. and rushed to the Albert Park Police station. Finding it closed he telephoned South Melbourne who took over the case. The murder led to Gideon Haigh's acclaimed 2015 book *Certain Admissions* which gave carefully researched insights into the gruesome murder, and subsequent trials.



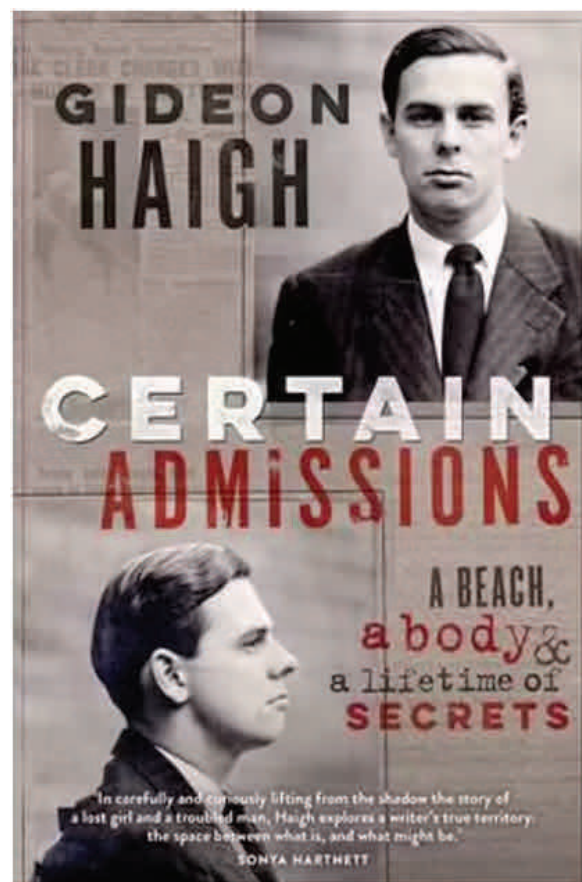
Argus 30 December 1941

To conclude, two unusual cases also made headlines. In 1941 Sergeant Hawkins of the Albert Park station waded up to his waist in the sea and shot a nine-foot grey shark with his revolver. The shark was cruising only 100 yards off shore near the Mills Street tram terminus, and had a companion which then swam off quickly. Hawkins was widely praised for his bravery.

In 1942 when six German prisoners escaped from an internment camp in the Goulburn Valley, one of them, Walter Fischbeck ended up in Albert Park. He calmly walked into the Windsor Hotel and explaining that he was a German prisoner, without any money, he asked the astonished barman for a beer. It is unclear whether the barman complied, but staff chatted to Fischbeck until Constable Davidson from the Albert station arrived and duly arrested him.

That concludes the short series on the police officers and stations of Albert Park and Middle Park, and some of their more sensational cases.

¹ *Record* 11 December 1909.



MPAPHG Meetings Calendar 2025–2026

O'Connor-Pilkington Room
(next to the Carmelite Library, 214 Richardson Street)

Monday 10 November: 7:30 pm

St Vincent's Boys Home Brass Band

The meeting will be a conversation between Jenny Glare, Historian and General Manager Heritage & Information Service for the MacKillop Family Services, and Abramo Ierardo (former Band Member). The St Vincent's Boys Home Brass Band was an evolution from a Brass and Pipe Band that was first formed in the 1880s. It had a high point in the mid-1970s with a tour of Tasmania that included a performance in the cabaret room of the Wrest Point Hotel. There were many highs for the players including competitions and performances all over Victoria.

Meeting dates for 2026:

20 April 2026

13 July 2026

7 September 2026

7 November 2026 (AGM)

Speakers to be advised



Your MPAPHG committee

President:	Meyer Eidelson
Vice-President:	Vacant
Secretary:	Abramo Ierardo
Treasurer:	Sonya Cameron
Liaison Officer	Vacant TBA
Committee members:	Jenny Cass, Lesleyanne Hawthorne, Sue Joyner, Gary Poore, Nadia Wright