

# MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP



## Editorial

This issue sees the return of regular contributor Bruce Armstrong with memories of a famous personage.

Sonya Cameron has contributed an article on local businesses, no longer running, plus her regular “Middle Park 100 years ago”.

World Environment Day is on 5 June 2019, the same day as every year. See page 10 to see how the City of South Melbourne, as we were then, celebrated

World Environment Week in 1992, 27 years ago. The “Fresh Start for Albert Park Lake” began then and improvements, especially to the walls around the margins of the, lake continue.

The second of our four regular meetings in 2019 will be on Monday 6 May, very soon.

*Gary Poore*

MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP Inc. PO Box 5276, Middle Park 3206

Email: [middleparkhistorygroup@gmail.com](mailto:middleparkhistorygroup@gmail.com)

Website: [www.middleparkhistory.org](http://www.middleparkhistory.org)

Newsletter editor : Gary Poore

The Middle Park History Group  
Supported by The City of Port Phillip



## The Melbourne Omnibus and Tram Company and the South Melbourne Co-operative Laundry 63–73 Kerferd Road

*Sonya Cameron*

Prior to the introduction of trams, Melbourne's public transportation was provided by horsedrawn vehicles, including a variety of carriages for hire, Hansom cabs and horse drawn omnibuses. The first public transport service in Victoria was operated by W F E Liardet between Sandridge (Port Melbourne) and Melbourne from December 1840. Other services followed. The Melbourne Omnibus Company was established in 1869 by Francis Boardman Clapp, William McCulloch and Henry Hoyt and initially operated 11 horse-drawn buses from Flinders Street and Spencer Street stations via Bourke Street to Fitzroy. On 11 September 1877 the Melbourne Tram & Omnibus Company was established and acquired the assets of the Melbourne Omnibus Company when the latter was liquidated in August 1878. It took over the running of the horse omnibuses and by 1882, its fleet consisted of 178 horse buses, each carrying 12-14 seated passengers, and operating fifteen different routes.

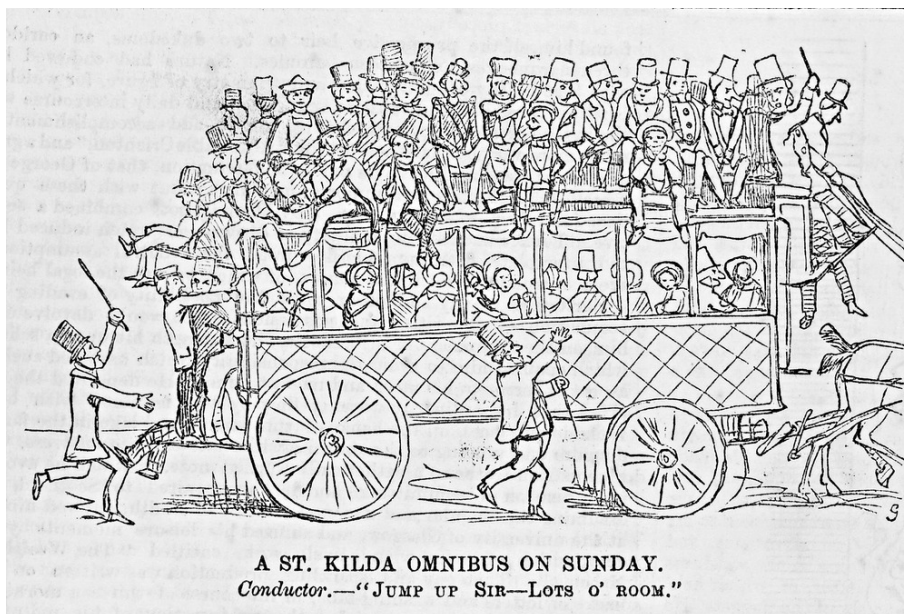
In 1878 the Melbourne Omnibus Company



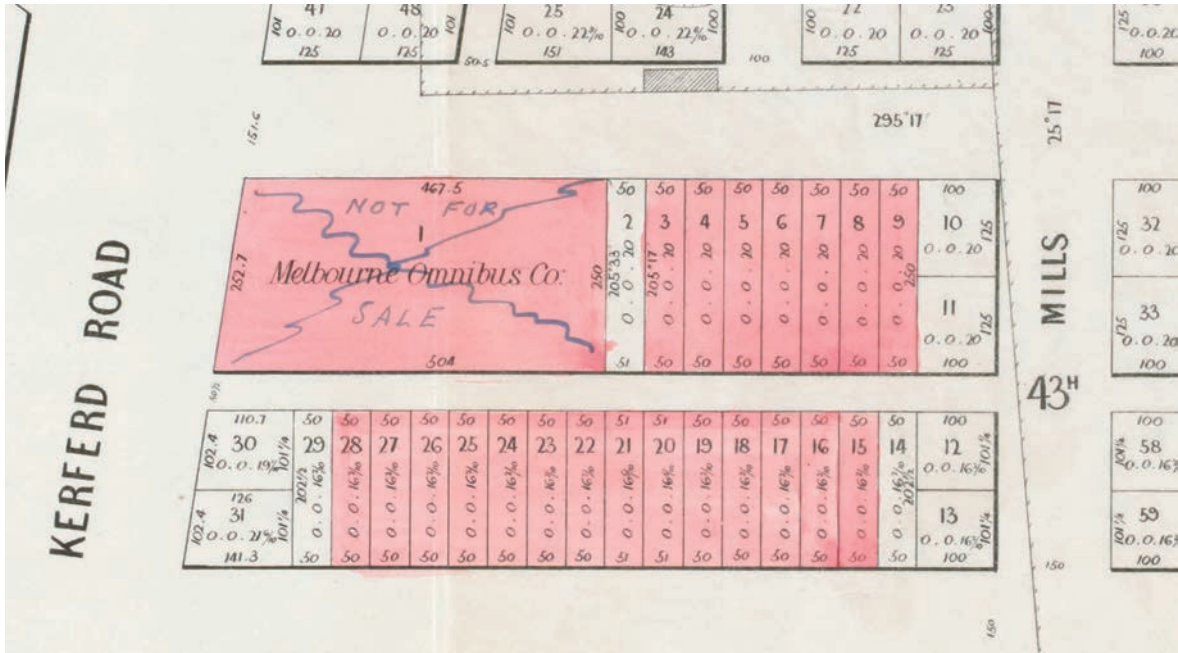
These two substantial Federation homes at number 63 Kerferd Road (on the corner of Herbert Street) and number 65 next door are on land formerly occupied by The Melbourne Omnibus and Tram Company and the South Melbourne Co operative Laundry.

leased, then later bought, an acre of land on Kerferd Road between Herbert Street and Carter Street, Albert Park and occupied the site from 1878 – 1890. In April 1878 The Town Council of Emerald Hill agreed to form a road leading up to the new stables.

A description of the development of the site appeared in *The Age*, 28 April 1878.



A St Kilda omnibus on Sunday, 1855 (SLV)



Extract from Building allotments near Albert Park Station 1878 (SLV)



Clarendon Street, west side, by David Wood (CoPP sm0430)

“The erection of the Emerald-hill stables of the Melbourne Omnibus Company is being pushed forward as rapidly as possible. The office and 'bus houses are built of brick, and occupy, with the harness room, nearly the whole of one side of the site obtained by the company. The stables, which are constructed to accommodate 159 horses, occupy two sides of the rectangular area, and are built of weatherboard. The side forming the rear of the premises is not yet built upon. The brick building alone was constructed by contract at a cost of £1200, while the remaining portion of the tenements are being erected by the company's workman. The site of the stables is on the Kerferd-road, near the Rifle Butts. The road has not yet been made up to the spot, but Workmen are now busily engaged in the work of forming the approaches to the stables. The ground flooring of the stables and the greater portion of the yard have had to be raised two or three feet, which has been accomplished by the free use of broken metal and sand. It is proposed to run twelve 'buses on the Emerald-hill line, and the company believe that a commencement will be made early in the coming month.”

On 26 July 1878 the *The Record and Emerald Hill and Sandridge Advertiser* announced that “the long-expected boon of an additional regular means of communication with the City will be un fait accompli to-morrow on Emerald Hill, when the Melbourne Tramway and Omnibus Company intend to commence running a line of busses between the corner of Bridport and Montague-streets via Park, Clarendon and Moray-streets and the Royal Arcade, Bourke-street” The fare would be 3d and the buses would run every few minutes, day and evening. In April 1887 the line was extended to Beaconsfield Parade.

Earlier omnibuses required passengers to clamber up three steps to board the tram but the new omnibus for the Emerald Hill line was built so that passengers could step straight from the ground into the bus – this design change was required because the bus had to pass under the

Falls Bridge which was too low for the original omnibus design.

On the 18 April 1890, the new Queen's Bridge over the Yarra River was opened. This new bridge replaced the old Falls Bridge, a ramshackle wooden structure which connected the city to South Melbourne and Port Melbourne. Once the new bridge was completed it was possible to replace the horse omnibus with a cable tram and the Melbourne Tram & Omnibus Company no longer required a depot and stables in Kerferd Road.

In *The Age* on 3 October 1890 the site was advertised by Buckhurst and Buxton as being for sale by Private Treaty and described as a ‘Splendidly Situated Freehold Property’. However, according to the South Melbourne rate books, the land remained in the ownership of the MT&OC until 1906. The site remained vacant for several years until, in 1893, the new occupiers were a wood and coal yard operated by James Page and the South Melbourne Co-Operative Laundry

The crash of the boom economy in Melbourne at the end of 1891 led to a huge increase in unemployment as the labour market dried up. *The Age* newspaper published a number of articles on the sufferings of the unemployed and their families. In order to help these families the newspaper created a ‘Snowball’ fund whereby every member of staff would be given a list. After writing his name and the amount of his donation on the list he would pass the list on to a friend requesting him to add his name and donation to the list and then pass it on, etc.

Money raised from the ‘Snowball’ Fund would be used to help the unemployed in a practical way. At a meeting in September 1892 it was decided to use money from the Fund to establish a laundry in South Melbourne on co-operative principles to provide work for unemployed women such as widows with children and wives of unemployed men. Donations would also be asked from members of the public, not only of money, but also of objects such as copper boilers, washing troughs,

mangles, tables, irons, wringers, etc.

At a meeting of the committee in November 1892 it was reported that part of the old bus stables and ground [in Kerferd Road] had been secured at a moderate rent and following necessary modifications the business would soon be in full swing.

The letter from the Honorary Treasurer of the Co-Operative best describes the philosophy of the laundry and its intended benefits.

### **SOUTH MELBOURNE CO-OPERATIVE LAUNDRY.**

#### **TO THE EDITOR OF THE ABERNETHY.**

Sir,—I read with interest in your issue of to-day the report of the meeting held at the Melbourne Town-hall, called for the purpose of "considering the desirability of conducting relief to the destitute during the coming winter on a definite basis," and with many who are interested in the matter, am much pleased to find that it is likely to be placed on a sound and practical basis, and as the latter part especially of the resolution, moved by Professor Morris and adopted, embodies the principle on which the South Melbourne Co-operative Laundry is conducted, I will esteem it a favour if you will permit me to appeal to the charitable public on its behalf, and to press its claims to their prompt and liberal support, and the more so that it provides work for women.

About six months ago a public meeting was convened in South Melbourne to consider the advisability of establishing a co-operative laundry, with the view of giving employment to industrious poor women, and a committee was appointed to carry out the scheme. After some little delay suitable premises were secured in Kerferd-road, Albert-park, and several contributions having been received the place was fitted up and an experienced lady manager appointed.

It was determined to attract support by making the quality of the work a special feature and to make the charges as low as possible, and at the same time to try and make the institution self-supporting and to give the workers the additional inducement of participating in the profits, if any. Thus far the experiment has been practically a success, though it has not yet become fully self-supporting, as the receipts, though steadily improving, are still short of the expenditure, and now, after six months' trial, the society finds itself over £100 in debt.

The Laundry closed in 1906 but no explanation for its closure could be discovered. Perhaps the Melbourne Tram & Omnibus Company were eventually able to sell the land as more and more houses were being built along Kerferd Road. The two large Federation houses at numbers 65 and 63 were built on half the land in 1908 and four smaller identical single-storey brick houses, numbers 67-73, were built on the remaining land.

The chairman, Mr. John Danka, and the committee give a considerable amount of attention to the scheme, and in the interests of the women employed - in number about 25 - are anxious that this most laudable enterprise should not break down for want of a little timely assistance.

The employes are strictly from among the unemployed, and it is very gratifying to know that upwards of 70 families are more or less supported by this effort, most of the workers being mothers of families, and in some instances being the sole bread-winners.

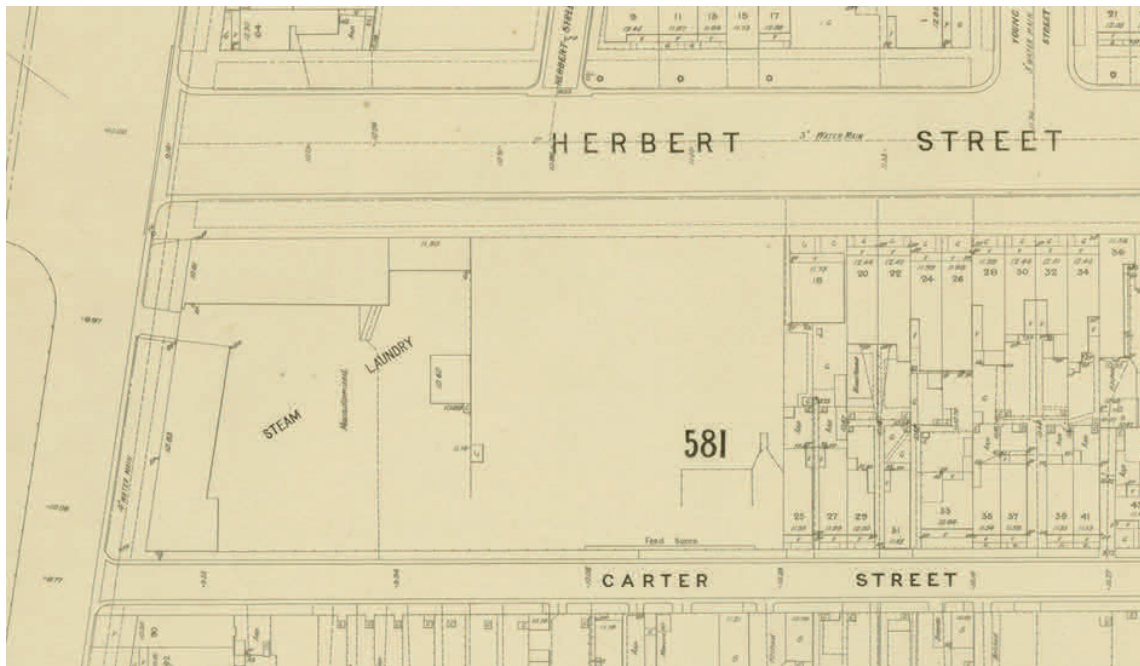
Surely such a scheme, which finds remunerative employment for industrious women, and enables them to preserve their self-respect, is entitled to the heartiest sympathy and support of the charitable, and I feel assured that if any lady or gentleman were to visit the institution and judge for themselves, they would be fully satisfied of its deserving nature, and encouraged to assist the enterprise by direct pecuniary aid, and also by sending work themselves, and recommending their friends to similarly contribute to its success.

The lady manager will be happy to see visitors to the laundry, and to give the fullest information as to work and charges, and donations to the funds will be thankfully received by the chairman, Mr. John Danka, of Albert-park, the secretary, Mr. Richard Tope, Clarendon-street, South Melbourne, or by the undersigned at the Bank of Victoria Limited, South Melbourne.

-Yours, &c.,

L. FRASER, Hon. Treasurer.

April 13.



Location of Steam Laundry as shown on a MMBW 1895 plan

## Mystery object

What is this a part of, and where is it? Thanks to our spotter James Wollett again.



## Vale Mary McDermott

### *Annette Robinson with Anne Sindrey (Mary's daughter)*

Mary McDermott, a long time member of the Middle Park History Group and a resident for 70 years, died peacefully on 19 January 2019. She was born in 1926 Mary Rosalie Chennell at Broken Hill, NSW, to parents Olive and Reverend Percy Chennell.

Mary, the oldest of four girls, grew up in South Australia, and as her father was a Methodist Minister, the family moved every three years, living in Kapunda, Moonta, Goodwood, Clarendon, Blackwood and Mount Barker.

Family life as a Minister's daughter was strict and frugal. During the depression Mary's parents ran a mission for the poor, and even though Mary was young she was expected to help. During the time of the poliomyelitis epidemic, all schools were closed, and during this period Mary and her siblings and parents would stay at Moonta Bay to enjoy the sun, sea and sand. Mary always loved the sea.

Mary's father had educated her in the management of money and with this skill, together with her good memory and meticulous attention to detail, she was able to work as a bookkeeper and comptometrist. Mary joined the RAAF as a Teleprinter Operator in Melbourne and was discharged in August 1946.

Mary met her future husband Ron McDermott on a blind date in front of the Regent Theatre in Collins Street, Melbourne. This had been arranged by one of the Corrick boys from Middle Park. She married Ron in 1949, when she was about 23 and he was about 25, and came to live at 115 Harold Street with him and the McDermott family. The house was the home where Ron had grown up and has been in the same family for 100 years. Mary and Ron spent the next 69 years by the sea at 115 Harold Street



and had two daughters (who still call number 115 their home). Ron had been an only child. Mary and Ron would have celebrated 70 years of marriage this year.

After her marriage, Mary continued to attend the Methodist Church in Richardson Street, Middle Park, and was involved with the Mothers' Group at Middle Park Primary School. In her later years Mary helped with the South Port Parishes weekly lunches and entertainment for the elderly.

In 1974 Mary returned to work as a comptometrist and bookkeeper for Peacocks, Australian Gold Buying Melbourne, and CEW Electrical in South Melbourne.

No wonder Mary loved living in Middle Park, as it perhaps reminded her of childhood days spent by the sea. Mary always thanked her lucky stars that she and Ron were able to live in such a wonderful suburb in such a convenient and comfortable home, close to trams, beach and lots of attractions. She and Ron always had plenty of family and friends wanting to come and stay.

## Middle Park 100 years ago

### Sonya Cameron

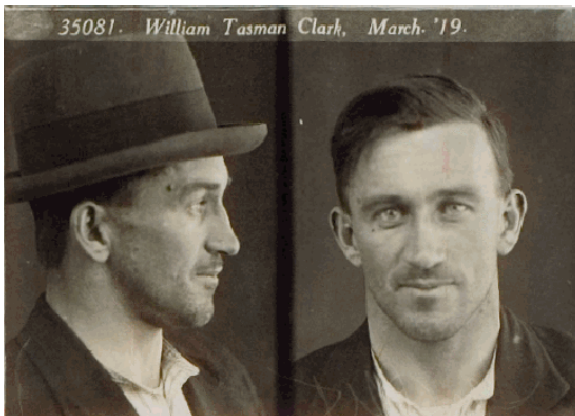
Between 1914 and 1923, the former English, Scottish and Australian Bank, colloquially known as the ES&A Bank, was located at 108 Canterbury Road, Middle Park. Unfortunately the building has since been demolished.

In February 1919, the bank was the focus of an attempted robbery by a gang of three men on the clerk who was carrying cash to the Albert Park branch of the bank. Unfortunately for the thieves, detectives had become aware of their plans and foiled them in a daring intercept, reported in full detail in this article in what was then our local newspaper, *The Record*, on Saturday 8 February 1919.

Following a verdict of guilty at their trial in March, two of the three men, Arthur Oliver and William Tasman Clark, were each sentenced to three years gaol. William Hoare did not appear and forfeited his bond of £150. It seems he was never caught.



35082. Arthur Oliver, March '19.



35081. William Tasman Clark, March '19.

#### ALBERT PARK SENSATION.

#### SUSPECTED PERSONS ARRESTED.

#### BANK MANAGER'S EXCITING EXPERIENCE.

A sensational incident, as the outcome of which two suspected men were arrested at the point of revolver by the police, and a third man was shot and seized while attempting to escape, occurred at Albert Park, in the vicinity of St. Silas's Church, on Wednesday afternoon.

Acting on certain information, Detectives Mullin and Lee kept under observation for several days three men whose loitering movements in the vicinity of the agency of the English, Scottish, and Australian Bank in Canterbury road, Middle Park, were regarded as suspicious. It is the practice of the officer in charge of the agency to transfer the cash and notes received during the day's business from the agency to the branch in Bridgeport street, Albert Park, carrying the money in a bag, and travelling between Middle Park and Albert Park by the 3.25 p.m. train. On Wednesday the detectives on observation duty, having reason to believe that the time of action by the men watched had arrived, obtained the co-operation of Detectives Olthoff, Madin, Milne, and Napthine, and Constables Bourke and Brooke, of South Melbourne. The eight officers arrived at Albert Park early in the afternoon, and unobtrusively took up prearranged posts, at which they hid themselves as far as possible, and awaited events. When the clerk, named H. D. Brooke, left the railway station, Albert Park, 30 yards distant, at about 20 minutes past 1 o'clock, the three suspected men left the points at which they had loitered daily while under observation, and also moved in the direction of the bank. Two walked a short distance ahead of Brooke, but more slowly than he, and the other, gradually increasing his pace, followed the clerk. One of the men in front carried a parcel, which was found subsequently to contain a stout piece of rubber hose, about eighteen inches long, loaded at one end with wood, and at the other with iron. This was described by a detective as a "unparalleled weapon," more effectively "loaded" than most of the kind that he had seen. The other man, it was also discovered later, was armed with a revolver, and the man in the rear, with a short piece of iron piping rolled up in a cloth.

As the three men closed in on Brooke the detectives and constables emerged from their hiding places, which had been so selected that the whole distance between the bank agency and station might be guarded. The two men in front of Brooke, when covered with revolvers, after momentary hesitation, put up their hands and submitted to arrest. The man behind Brooke, however, threw away the piece of iron, and turning upon his track, attempted to escape. Detective Lee and Constable Bourke gave chase, and called on the man to stop. He ran the faster, and disregarded a revolver shot fired in the air. A second shot struck the man in the centre of the back and checked his flight. He remained active, however, and being a powerful man, struggled violently with the detective and constable when they closed with him, and employed savage methods before being eventually handcuffed. He was taken to the Melbourne Hospital, and admitted to a ward under police guard. He gave his name as Tasman Clark, laborer, aged 30 years. The two other men were lodged in the city watchhouse, and gave their names respectively as Arthur Oliver, laborer, aged 28 years, and William Hoare, butcher, aged 24 years. They were all described as "of no fixed abode."

It will be well remembered locally that in July, 1917, Mr. Brooke was covered with revolvers and bound and gagged by two men, who entered the Middle Park agency at closing time and decamped with a large sum of money. The men were later arrested and each was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment and the indeterminate sentence. The attention the agency has had from criminals is probably due to its being in a quiet locality and in charge of only one officer.

#### Accused Men Remanded.

At the City Court on Thursday, Arthur Oliver, laborer, and William Hoare, butcher, were charged with having, on Wednesday afternoon, loitered with intent to commit a felony, being suspected persons. The accused were undefended.

Detective Lee gave evidence of the arrest of the accused, and of a third man, Tasman Clark, laborer, now in the Melbourne Hospital under police guard. Witness and other detectives and constables watched the accused, who were walking ahead of H. D. Brooke, an officer of the E. S. and A. Bank, who was conveying a bag of money from the Middle Park agency to the Albert Park branch, and Clark, who followed Brooke. Witness and his companions "walked out" on the accused and arrested them. Clark "made a bolt," and, after a shot had been fired in the air, and another had struck him in the back, and a scuffle, Clark was also arrested.

The accused were each remanded till February 13. Bail of £500 was allowed in the case of each.

From *The Record* published until 1979, "Circulating in South Melbourne, Albert Park, Middle Park, St. Kilda and Port Melbourne", telephone number, 1371.

From Register of male and female prisoners, PROV, VPRS 515



## A Middle Park knight

### *Bruce Armstrong*

In 1932 I was in grade 2 of Middle Park Primary School. There were two mixed grades of boys and girls – one taught by experienced middle-aged Miss Colley and the other by a trainee teacher, John Rossiter, a young man of about 18. He was tall, handsome in a rugged sort of way, solidly build and athletic in appearance. Word got around that he was a skilled boxer.

We six-year-olds were in awe of him, he affected a jaunty swagger, the girls liked him, he was a deterrent to the boys with their hair-pulling and teasing. We often saw “our Mr Rossiter” in the Middle Park Baths or sun-bathing on the beach and were glad that he was obviously domiciled locally.

In 1933 he advanced to teaching Grade 3. He kept us interested with how he interpreted the curriculum, particularly “nature study”. He kept a live praying mantis on an indoor plant on his desk. Being fast with his hands, he could catch flies in flight or at rest, then impale them on a steel pen-nib. The fly would be offered to the mantis and we gathered around to watch it eating its free meal alive.

A large black spider had its web in a corner of the room and “Sir” sometimes threw a hapless fly into its web to be efficiently grabbed and hauled into its “dining room”. Nature study! We revelled in it. The visiting school inspectors would have been impressed with this young man’s methods, perhaps his papers were marked “worth consideration for accelerated promotion”. One comment at the time was “Rossiter’s personality means he is formidable to his foes and his friends”.

About 1957 I had entered the teaching service as a trainee trade instructor in technical schools. From the grapevine we learned that Rossiter had become an academic and advanced to the position of Head of the RMIT English

Department. Well informed and forceful in debate, he was poised and confident.

He entered politics and was elected MLA for the blue-ribbon seat of Brighton. Through his own connections and his daughter Susan’s marriage to Federal member, Andrew Peacock, his appointment to Chief Secretary in the Victorian Government of Premier Tom Hollway was quite a “bunk up” for our man from Middle Park.

This was a powerful position – one of his responsibilities was for police. In the Honours List appeared Sir John Rossiter KBE. From teaching boys and girls at Middle Park Primary the 12-times tables and basic language skills, our man had come a long way.

Sir John Frederick Rossiter KBE was born on 17 December 1913 and died on 18 January 1988.





# The Chronicle

City of South Melbourne Community Newsletter

Town Hall  
Bank Street  
South Melbourne 3205  
Telephone: 695 8222

Volume 9 No. 5

June 1992

## Fresh Start for Albert Park Lake

Albert Park Lake, now managed by Melbourne Water, is to get a fresh start. Over the years, the lake has become slowly choked with weeds and silt; now it is to be drained, lined with clean sand and refilled with fresh water in time for the warmer months.

It is a huge operation, and contractors will start in early June, working non-stop throughout the winter to complete the project by October. The renewal of the lake will cost Melbourne Water approximately \$2 million, and is just part of their planned transformation of Albert Park Reserve.

The result will be a beautiful recreation area with something to suit everyone - and for this reason the plan is supported by South Melbourne Council, sports clubs located at the park, and conservation groups. When completed, the park will boast excellent sports facilities and much improved landscaping, with some sections of the lake and shoreline devoted to natural bush and an improved habitat for native birds and other wildlife.

Temporary weirs will be built so that the lake can be drained in segments - thus disturbing wildlife as little as possible - and each segment will be fenced off in turn. Activities on the lake itself will be prohibited, but people will still be able to visit unaffected parts of the reserve. Although joggers and walkers will face a few detours they will nevertheless be able to complete a circuit of the lake.

Dredging will involve the removal of sediment half a metre thick. The growth



Photo: Patricia Lendrum

of lake weeds, which have been such a problem in the past, will be able to be efficiently controlled - thus greatly improving conditions for boating and other water sports.

Some inconvenience, such as occasional traffic delays, is inevitable - but

*Albert Park Lake - a favourite recreation spot for South Melbourne residents - is to have a \$2 million 'facelift'.*

the result will make it all worthwhile. If you would like further information, please telephone the Albert Park Lake Fresh Start Hotline 615 5100.



The City of South Melbourne  
celebrates

**World Environment Week**  
1-5 June



World Environment Week is celebrated on the anniversary of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. This conference, held 20 years ago this week, was instrumental in sparking the global environmental awareness which is now such a part of our lives.

The City of South Melbourne is proud of its environmental initiatives and the progress it has made toward achieving its goal of a greener, cleaner City.

**Inside** ■ Environment Strategy Progress ■ Prizes for Recyclers

## Vice President's report

Recently I led a two hour City of Port Phillip walking tour based on one of our new flyers: Woodcrafts of Middle Park. It was very well attended by 21 people who loved the walking maps and the stunning Queen Anne, Federation and Edwardian housing revealed on the map route.

The City is consulting with us about its annual program of heritage plaques highlighting buildings or locations that are heritage treasures. Let us know if you have suggestions. We have recommended the former Lanark Terrace site for a plaque.

At our last general meeting we canvassed with members possible new directions for our history

group. These included expanding our territory to include Albert Park which could increase our general and committee membership and improve heritage promotion and representation for our adjacent suburb. Other suggestions include a funded history prize for the local school and new books focussing on children as the future historians of tomorrow. One creative idea is a colouring-in sketch book of iconic buildings. We also plan to create a new colour promotional flyer. The committee is keen to pursue new ideas and welcomes any suggestions.

Looking forward to seeing you all on 6 May.

Regards

Meyer Eidelson

## MPHG meeting schedule 2019

Monday 6 May 2019 – Maurita Harney “Growing up in Middle Park—recollections of the 1940s and 1950s”

Maurita's grandparents moved into Page Street Middle Park in 1920, and her family has had a continuous presence in the suburb since then. Maurita reflects on her experience in the neighbourhood, the schools, the streetscapes and shops.

Monday 2 September 2019 – Janet Bolitho and Margaret Bride

Monday 11 November 2019 (AGM) – Adair Bunnett

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) and are followed by supper.

### Your MPHG committee

President:	Meyer Eidelson (acting)
Vice-President:	Meyer Eidelson
Secretary:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Sonya Cameron
Liaison officer:	Diana Phoenix
Committee members:	Annette Robinson, Tony Liston
Oral history:	Annette Robinson