

# MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP

## Newsletter 15 July 2015



Photograph: Rose Stereograph Co. State Library of Victoria

### Flora of Middle Park

This is the third of a series of articles by **Lynsey Poore** on the plants growing in Middle Park. The series concentrates on the plants used in public places, mostly along our streets and examines their origin and history.

#### Coast Banksia *Banksia integrifolia*

The Coast Banksia, also known as Honeysuckle or White Banksia, is one of few Australian trees whose common name is part of its botanical name, *Banksia integrifolia* var. *integrifolia*. Numerous examples can be seen in Middle Park along Beaconsfield Parade, Wright Street and scattered in other streets. The Coast Banksia is one of very few street trees that are part of the existing flora before Middle Park was settled. Most street trees are exotics from Europe or elsewhere.

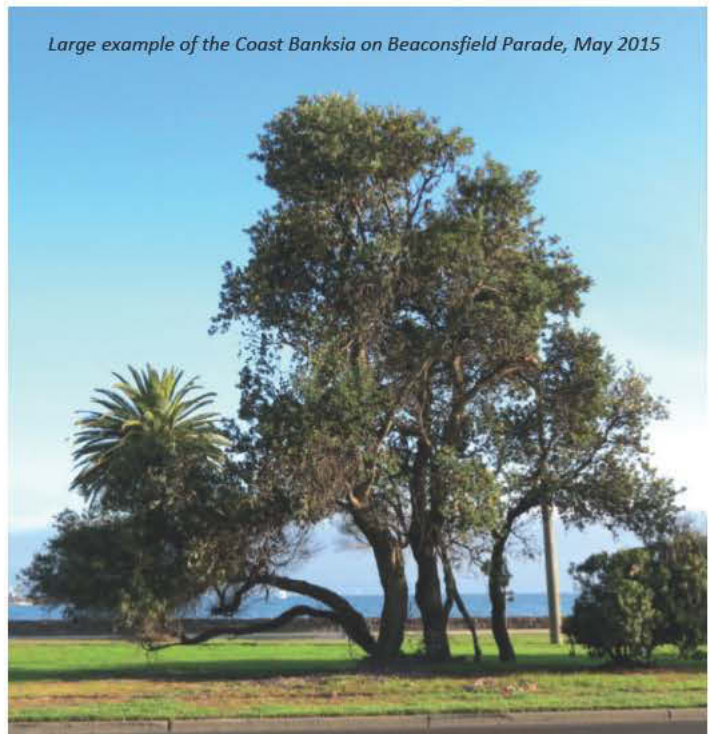
The species is distributed from Queensland to Victoria and is one of the most widely distributed species of the Australian endemic genus *Banksia*. It is called the Coast Banksia because it is common in coastal ranges and foreshore vegetation. In places it grows right to the water's edge and is resistant to the effects of salt spray.

The first specimen collected by European botanists was found in Botany Bay, NSW, by Sir Joseph Banks in 1770 while he accompanied Captain Cook on his exploration of Australia. The genus name was named after Banks by the son of Carl Linnaeus, the botanist responsible for establishing our system of botanical names. The specific name is from the Latin integer (entire) and folium (a leaf) referring to the smooth margin of the adult leaves. There are three varieties or subspecies.

The tree may grow to 25 m tall but may also be a stunted shrub. Many of the examples in Middle Park are very young and often topped to prevent interference with power lines. The bark is roughly tessellated. The leaves occur in whorls of 3-5 and have dark green upper surfaces and white undersides.

(Cont page 2)

Large example of the Coast Banksia on Beaconsfield Parade, May 2015



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Flowering occurs from January to July. The familiar cylindrical flower spike comprises several hundred flowers densely packed in a spiral around a woody axis. The flowers are pale yellow. After flowering the old flowers fall away revealing the cone covered in many small follicles that contain the seeds.

The Coast Banksia is a hardy and versatile tree that is widely planted in parks and streetscapes. Port Phillip Council recommends it as part of its street planting.

The wood is pink-red but unsuitable for construction. Dark amber-coloured poor quality honey is produced but the large amounts of pollen and nectar produced is food for the bees in winter.

The Aborigines made sweet drinks from the flowers and used the flower spikes for hairbrushes while the early settlers would put fat in the empty cones to use as candles.

Two councils in Queensland (Redcliffe and Logan) use the Coast Banksia as a floral emblem and it has been featured on a Australian postage stamp.

*Photographs by author*



*Close up of Coast Banksia foliage, flowers and cones, May 2015.*

## Diana Phoenix tells the story of the buildings established by the Methodist Church in Middle Park



### THE METHODISTS

A Methodist Sunday school was started in Middle Park in 1888 following a request by the South Melbourne Circuit quarterly meeting of the Methodist Church. It was intended as a branch of the one existing in Albert Park. The organisation had tried to buy land for a church in Middle Park but had been unsuccessful because of rising prices. The Sunday School was housed in the Middle Park State School building 'in a fairly compact district, of cosy homes amidst pleasant surroundings'. By the following year the numbers had grown to 201 pupils and 12 teachers.



*The 'new' Methodist Church opened in 1923*

After a Church Trust was formed it was able to buy an allotment. A church, known as the Wesleyan Chapel, was then built on the corner of Richardson and Armstrong Streets, with its Sunday school operating in a building behind. The Chapel faced Richardson Street, leaving an empty space between the building and Armstrong Street. The opening ceremony took place on 27 September, 1891. At this time the chairman was Hon. J. Nimmo MLA.

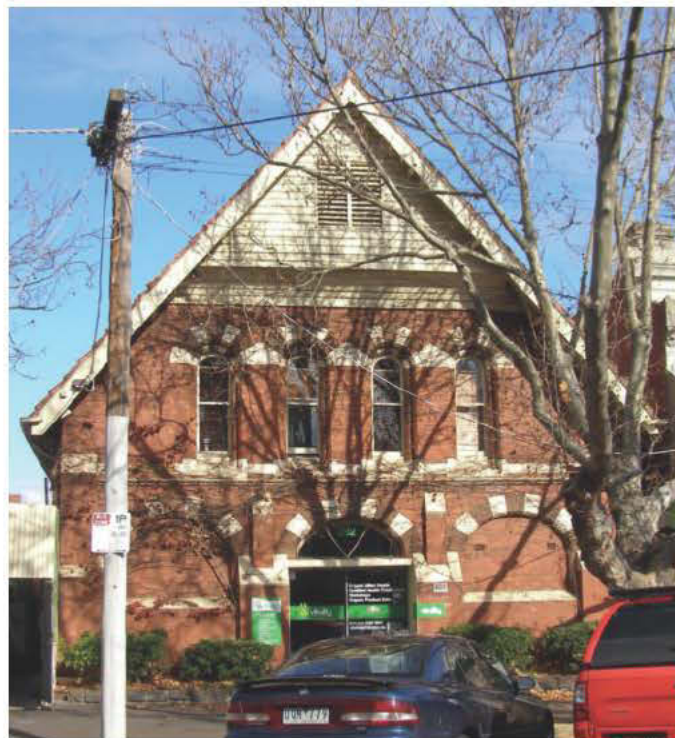
In 1902 the various offshoots of Methodism in Australia united to form the Methodist Church of Australasia, hence the change of name from chapel to church. The building remains, now 282 Richardson Street and currently occupied by a health and wellness clinic. However it blends in with the neighbouring buildings so well that externally it could be unrecognisable as a former church. Viewed from the inside the cove ceiling, lined with tongue and groove stained pine wood, does give an indication that this had not been an ordinary dwelling but a church. The architectural style is Romanesque, with polychrome brick work. The facade contains three arches, the central one being wider, and now comprises a recently installed glassed entrance. The timber building extant behind would have housed the Sunday school. During 1913 a cyclone fence was erected in front of the Church but has gone long-since. The facade was tuck-pointed during the same period. There is no indication of a parsonage until listed in the 1911 Sands & McDougall Directories, located at 66 Nimmo Street, and occupied by Rev. R. Williams.

By 1909 Miss Yatala Cole was conducting a primary and subprimary school in two rooms at the rear of the church. She had 20 pupils, boys and girls, aged between five and eleven. However, the Health Department found that the rooms were 'badly arranged regarding shape and use. The surroundings were too cramped, and the ventilation practically nil.' Miss Cole was relocated to a first-floor room of a two-storeyed dwelling close by on the same side of Richardson Street.

A kindergarten class was established in connection with the Sunday school in 1913 but was held in a hall in close proximity, which was Honeybone's Hall in Neville Street. Annual Sunday school picnics took place, one in the Botanical Gardens in 1913, with 60 children being taken in horse-driven vans, and another to Ringwood in 1914, this one by train, combined with Albert Park State School.

By 1919 the Church was planning extensions, resulting in the Trustees Building Committee purchasing a site for a new church, to be built on the same side of Richardson Street, towards McGregor Street, with the parsonage next door, now an independent dwelling at no. 292. Tenders for the work to be done were beyond the amount estimated but a contract was finally signed by August 1922. The architect to be engaged was Alec S. Eggleston. The opening of the new church took place on 2 May, 1923 when the former church building became the kindergarten. The original building had been a financial burden at times and had, at one stage, been offered to the Anglican Church. However, 'as expanding population ensued in Middle Park a new church, with improved Sunday School accommodation, became a necessity. It needed to have some architectural excellence. The building was to be of brick, with seating capacity for 300, and the furniture to be of Tasmanian oak.' The resulting late Edwardian design has a slate roof and a Gothic style main window with lead-light cartouche showing a Bible and flowers. The octagonal tower topped with a castellated parapet is on the left beside a loggia entrance which has two side bays. Behind this is a truncated transept. The windows are defined by cement rendered fenestration. Honeybone's Hall, behind in Neville Street, was used for a Sunday school as well as the kindergarten.

The Church underwent some renovations in 1978, following the inauguration of the Uniting Church on 22 June, 1977. The South Port Parks Parish Mission had been formed in 1971 as a regional parish. It set about coping with declining attendances and deciding where to centralise worship. As a result the Presbyterian Church building, opposite Middle Park Primary School, was sold to the Education Department so that the Methodist one could be developed. A community room was created in the rear section, thus making the church smaller. However, by 1992 the latter was sold and by 1994 the building had been converted into three apartments and is now known as The Abbey, at 288 Richardson Street.



*The 1891 Wesleyan Chapel*

**Sources:**

- Public Record Office of Victoria. VPRS 7882/P1.
- Spectator
- South Melbourne Circuit in Methodist History, Vol.3.
- Protestant Churches in South Melbourne: file held in COPP Heritage Centre.
- Our Little Paper: Official organ of Albert Park Methodist Circuit.
- Sands & McDougall Directories.
- Max Nankervis.



## MYSTERY OBJECT

You can find numerous examples of these objects around Middle Park.

What do the initials MMBW stand for?

What is their function?

## NOTICES

1. The MPHG August General Meeting will be in the form of workshops designed to explore new directions for the Group.
2. Remember to check our Website regularly. There are regular updates and a host of links to be explored.

## KNOW YOUR STREET NAMES



Thomas Ramsden Ashworth (1864-1935) was born in Richmond, son of Thomas Ashworth and his wife Mary. His father, educated at Eton and Jesus College, Cambridge, had migrated to Australia, married in 1862 and graduated M.B. at the University of Melbourne in 1869.

At 13 Thomas ran away to sea. Four years later he was back in Melbourne working as a carpenter and builder, and studying architecture. He practised as an architect for many years, was elected a fellow of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in 1916, and the early 1920s was associated with the design of the Church Street Bridge, Richmond. He had also set up as an estate agent in 1893, buying land in Middle Park and building a series of houses in a street named after him; he later built a block of nine flats in St Kilda Road.

Ashworth was a founder of several companies including the Union Can Co. and was for many years a director of Bussell, Robson Pty Ltd, clothiers. He was chairman of the canister-makers' section of the Chamber of Manufactures (1910-17), president of the Victorian Employers' Federation (1920-34) and also held office in its Australian council. In 1927 he founded the Employers' Federation Insurance Co, and chaired its board of directors.

In 1897 Ashworth failed to win the Legislative Assembly seat of Albert Park. He was president of the Victorian division of the Free Trade and Liberal Association in 1898-1902, and as its candidate stood unsuccessfully against Isaac Isaacs for the Federal seat of Indi in 1901. The following year he stood against Isaacs's brother in the State seat of Ovens.

Campaigning on a platform of retrenchment, especially in relation to the public service, he won comfortably. In the Legislative Assembly he remained consistent to the principles which he had put forward in a book, written with his brother, entitled '*Proportional representation applied to party government*' (Melbourne, 1900). In 1904 he was defeated for the seat of Hampden.

Ashworth's brief parliamentary career left a deep impression on him. Although he took pride in the fact that after 1920 the Employers' Federation had no formal ties with political parties, he was an active commentator on public affairs. As a publicist he demonstrated lucidity and wide reading and his abilities were recognised by his colleagues. He was a member of many delegations and committees, and in 1927-29 Ashworth was a member of the royal commission on the Constitution and with two Labor politicians wrote a minority report advocating greater Commonwealth powers.

In the last years of his life Ashworth lived at Frankston where he had built a model poultry-breeding farm. In 1888 at St Silas' Church, South Melbourne, he had married Emily Ashweek, who died in 1922. Six years later he married Marguerita Adele Young; both marriages were childless. Survived by his wife, his will requested that the University of Melbourne set up in his name a chair or lectureship or a biennial prize in sociology. His portrait by Streeton is held by the Victorian Employers' Federation.

Extract with thanks to Dr Rob Grogan, from his book: *Colonels, Colonials and Councillors: The Origin of Street Names of South Melbourne* Grogan, R; Cygnet Books, 2007.



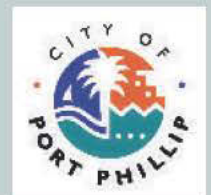
## Tessellated Tiles

There is a wealth of different ornate tessellated tile patterns found on verandahs and in hallways throughout Middle Park. Tessellated tiles were common in Victorian homes where patterns varied considerably. Most of the tiles were plainly coloured but elaborate decorative motifs were often applied to some, so called encaustic tiles.

The popularity of this form of tile decoration continued into the Federation Style, however patterns were simplified and often reduced to one or two colours.



The Middle Park  
History Group  
is supported by  
The City of Port Phillip



### MEETING SCHEDULE:

Committee meeting: 6 July 2015 General Meeting: 3 August 2015 Committee meeting: 7 September 2015

AGM 5 October 2015

Agenda items and supporting documents will be sent to you prior to meeting dates.