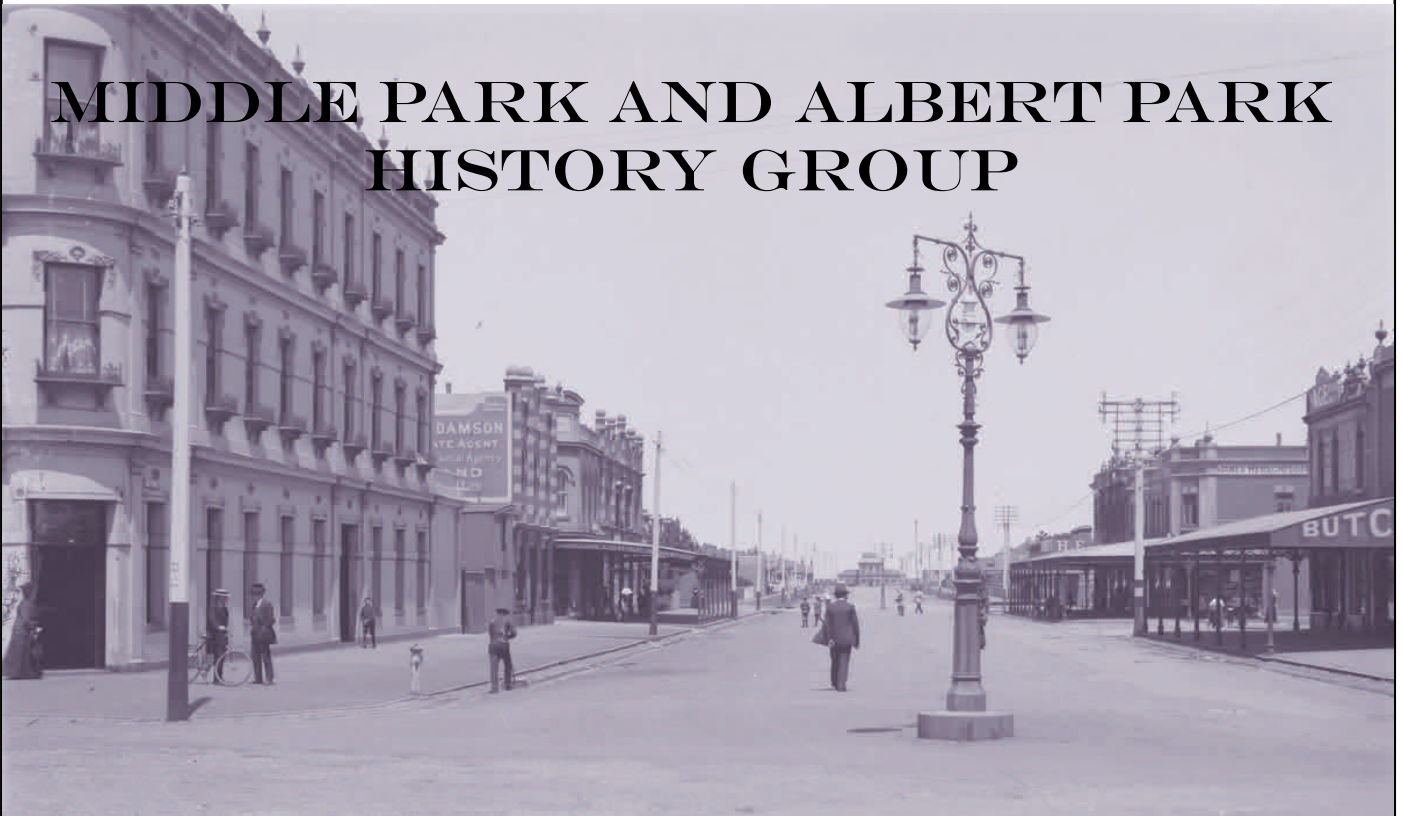


# MIDDLE PARK AND ALBERT PARK HISTORY GROUP



## Editorial

In this newsletter, Sonya Cameron writes on what newspapers considered was acceptable beach-wear 100 years ago. Jenny Sinclair has summarised the double life of Edward Oxford aka John Freeman, a one-time Albert Park resident. This account is based on her fascinating talk to us at our August meeting. Nadia Wright has contributed an essay on the many schools that were once in Middle Park, a prelude to her contribution on schools in Albert Park for MPAPHG's next book. And we say farewell to another oldtime resident.

Our AGM on Monday 13 November will be addressed by our inaugural president and long-term resident, John Stirling, who will speak on "Middle Park Primary School and the Hellas Soccer Club in the 1970–80s".

I am still on the lookout for items for the newsletter. Albert Park hasn't been covered in the previous 47 issues! And the committee is still seeking members, especially from Albert Park. Consider putting your name forward at this AGM.

*Gary Poore*

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

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

Website:

<http://middleparkandalbertparkhistory.org.au/>

Newsletter editor : Gary Poore

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## President's Report

Finally glorious Spring weather, it has been a long winter.

On 6 June 1835 John Batman signed the Melbourne or Dutigalla Treaty somewhere in (today) the northern suburbs of Melbourne. The events are outlined in James Boyce's book *1835*. These Tasmanian colonisers drew up deeds which provided for occupancy of land for an annual payment of goods. Their motives to secure a treaty were based in part on the failure of their near genocidal 'black war' in Tasmania. They used Aboriginal negotiators to secure their treaty agreement. This was a golden opportunity for the British government of William Lamb or Lord Melbourne, which was anti-slavery and pro-native, to secure a peace. Instead they rejected a treaty and a bloody frontier war ensued.

If they had accepted a treaty would the current generation still be experiencing the unresolved divisions over the massive disadvantages of Indigenous Australians? Americans signed approx. 390 treaties with Indigenous Americans. New Zealanders, Pakeha and Maori, signed the Treaty of Waitangi.

The Voice Referendum is another attempt to address over 200 years of failed actions. Will future generations regard it as a distraction, a multi-generational opportunity or a failure of moral courage?

Meyer Eidelson

## 100 years ago – October 1923

### *Sonya Cameron*

As our thoughts turn to summer and hot days spent on the beach in a light-weight bathing costume, or maybe even a bikini, pity the bather 100 years ago (particularly the lady bather) who was required on many beaches, including Albert Park, to wear heavy woollen garments in which to bathe.

However, *The Herald* newspaper suggested that the regulations do not specify the type of material from which the costume should be made, and that one made of silk would be much more comfortable.

#### “NECK TO KNEE”

##### Silk Bathing Costumes

“Neck to Knee” will be the watch words of the metropolitan municipalities controlling beaches this season.

But the knell of the bathing beauty has not yet been sounded, despite this rigid regulation.

The credit— or discredit— of insisting on a two-piece neck-to-knee costume, or a one-piece costume with kilted skirting for the bathing girl, cannot be entirely attributed to the municipalities. The Royal Life Saving Society approached them, suggesting that a uniform costume, on the lines indicated, should be made compulsory and most of the councils have adopted the idea.

#### REFUGE IN SILK

However, by the use of costumes fabricated of silk, feminine grace will

still have scope for display. It was stated today at city emporiums that many sets of silk bathing attire, both in one piece, with kilting, and in two pieces, have been sold during the last few days. The councils have not yet stipulated that the material of the uniform costume shall be of thick wool. The stipulations of the councils concerned are:

Brighton: Canadian two-piece neck-to-knee costume,

Mentone - Mordialloc: Canadian two-piece neck-to-knee costume,

Port Melbourne: Canadian two-piece neck-to-knee costume,

Sandringham: "No person shall bathe unless in a Canadian costume, with kilt, which shall effectively cover the body from neck to knee in decency."

South Melbourne (including Albert Park foreshore): Two-piece or similar skirted costume

St. Kilda: "Bathers must be effectively and decently clothed from neck to knee in a bathing costume, kilted, or similar to that known as the Canadian costume."

Willamstown: Kilted neck-to-knee costume.

(*The Herald (Melbourne)*, 19 September 1923, p. 6)



“In many shops bathing gowns of this pattern [above] are shown, and look most, attractive. Black wool stockinette is combined with wool or silk stripes in reds or brilliant greens; these give the necessary touch of color to an otherwise sombre costume.”

*(The Age (Melbourne), 26 Dec 1923, p. 4)*

“Or you might like to make your own using these designs [shown right].”

*(Daily Mail (Brisbane), 31 March 1922, p. 9)*





## A Walking Shadow. The Remarkable Double Life of Edward Oxford

*Jenny Sinclair*

Edward Oxford was born in Birmingham in 1822. His mother was a gentle natured woman by most accounts, but his father, George – who was himself the victim of domestic violence – was a nasty case. He'd bullied his wife into marrying him in the first place, with a combination of threats to himself and general insistence. He quickly moved on to beating her, and she carried some of the scars for life. When he died, Edward was just a boy of seven. While his mother tried to make ends meet, he was sent out to different schools and then to work for extended family members in hotels.

So by 1840, when he turned 18, he thought of himself as a man of the world. That year, he lost his job in London and his mother left town for a while; this was when he tried to make himself famous, by shooting at Queen Victoria as her carriage crossed the park behind Buckingham Palace.

It was lucky for Oxford that he was already considered an odd character, and his father and other male relatives had been thought frankly insane. Oxford was not executed, but neatly put away for good. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity – one of the first uses of this legal ruling.

The evidence ranged from stories of his father riding a horse into the parlour and generally violent behaviour – his father's madness would have been considered likely to be passed on to his son – to Oxford's own behaviour: breaking into laughter at inappropriate times, getting into fights and pointing guns at young women he was trying to impress. The court heard he'd even been violent towards his own mother.

So he was sent to the Bethlem Royal Asylum (Bedlam) at Her Majesty's pleasure, which meant pretty much for life.

There isn't much on record about Oxford's first 15 years in Bethlem, but later reports suggest he was well behaved, polite and lucid from the moment he walked through the door.

In 1857 he was moved to a new ward for well-behaved criminals, where he came in contact with Bethlem's new Steward, George Haydon. Haydon was a former adventurer in Australia, who treated Oxford almost as an equal, and the two became friends. The friendship with Haydon included going to lectures Haydon gave about the time he'd spent in Australia, in which he described the environment



Edward Oxford taking a shot at Queen Victoria

around Melbourne and talked about how a man could be taken on his merits there. Haydon also wrote a book aimed at prospective emigrants, called *Five Years' Experience in Australia Felix*, which Oxford certainly read, and kept a journal which is now in the National Library in Canberra

The friendship was severed in 1864, when, aged 42, Oxford was moved to the new Broadmoor prison for the criminally insane, along with all of his fellow inmates.

Around this time, some influential figures including the governor of Broadmoor were making moves to have his case reconsidered. It was clear to everyone that he was sane and that further incarceration would only be cruel. The first attempt failed, but in 1867 a series of letters assuring the Home Office that Oxford was sane and would leave the country for good finally secured his release.

He was taken to Plymouth and put aboard a ship. In Plymouth, he wrote this letter to George Haydon:

*Sir,*

*This is the first independent act of my new existence. Last night for the first time for nearly 28 years I slept, or rather went to bed, with the key of*

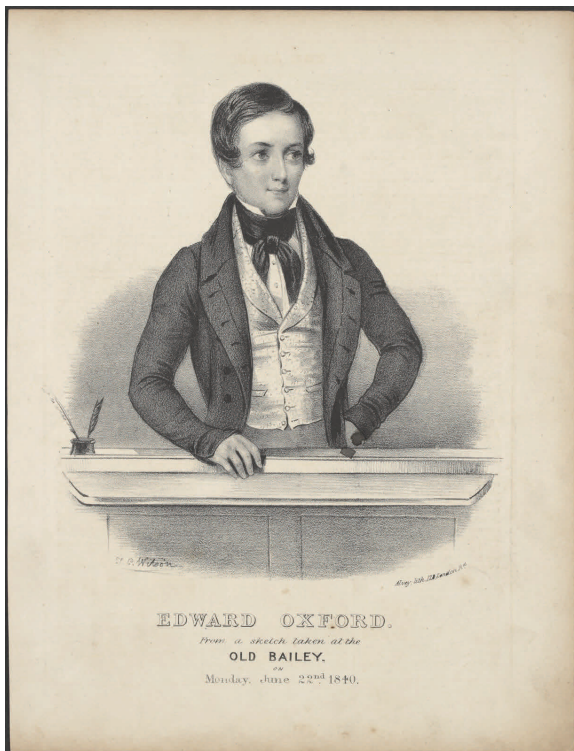
*the bedroom door on my side. You may fancy my feelings if you like, but you won't be able to feel as I then felt.*

*Believe me ever gratefully yours,*

*E.O*

From the minute he stepped aboard the ship, he was known as "John Freeman" – a free man. On arrival in Australia, all the work he'd done in Bedlam started to pay off. He apparently stayed out of trouble, and was soon working as a painter. A few years later he surfaced as a member of the West Melbourne Mutual Improvement Society. This was loosely connected, through mutual membership, with St James' Cathedral. The cathedral is now a historic building in the city, with a small congregation. But in the 1870s it was a centre of Melbourne's social and religious life, being the official Anglican Cathedral of the colony until St Paul's was built.

John Freeman went on to serve as a vestryman for many years and he represented the Old Cathedral at the General Assembly in the 1890s during a very troubled time; he was an important factor in saving the old building from falling into ruin during the depression of those years.



Edward Oxford at the Old Bailey during his trial for shooting at Queen Victoria, 1840



Edward Oxford, aka John Freeman, in Melbourne as a painter

This wasn't his only claim to fame. In 1888 he published a book *Lights and Shadows of Melbourne Life* with a London publisher. The book was a kind of sensational guidebook to the high life and the degraded back streets of Melbourne – at the time Melbourne was a hot topic in England, with its wealth, international exhibitions and growing influence in the colony.

The book is still often used as a source by Melbourne historians, though I'd suggest it should all be taken with a grain of salt, given who "John Freeman" was.

On the personal front, Melbourne was good to him. In 1881, he married a widow called Jane Bowen, who'd been working as a seamstress and had two children from her previous marriages.

He didn't tell her about his past: not for at least the first eight years and probably not at all. His letters back to Haydon – which only began after he had become successful, by his own judgement – suggest he had pushed all that to the back of his mind and found it painful to even think about.

Despite the lies – both Jane and John lied about their ages on the marriage certificate – the marriage apparently succeeded. The new couple and Jane's two children lived in Howe Crescent for many years.

All in all, it was a highly respectable and creditable life "John Freeman" had – the church, publication and a good family life. He died, aged 78, in 1900, of apoplexy – probably a heart attack – and he's buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery under the name John Freeman.

## Vale Vince 1 November 1933–20 February 2023

### *Diana Phoenix*

Vincenzo Facchino was born in San Nicandro Garganico, Foggia, on 1 November 1933. When his school was closed down in order to accommodate English and American troops he was sent to his grandparents' farm where he remained until he was thirteen. During this time he taught himself to read and write, enabling him to start a carpentry apprenticeship. Once fully qualified he became eligible to apply to migrate to Australia where carpenters were being offered sponsored work for two years. Embarking at Brindisi in June, 1952 he landed at Port Melbourne after 42 days at sea and was sent to the military camp at Bonegilla. This made him wish to return to Italy but he met his wife Maria in 1954, which gave him reason to stay.

Working as a cabinet maker in Port Melbourne he became a pattern maker, designing full-sized templates of model wings and doors for F18 aircraft.

In 1957 he and Maria bought a house, 237 Richardson Street, Middle Park, where they remained for the rest of his life. His parents and three brothers came to live with them but his parents returned to Italy. Here we all knew him as Vince, his hearty laugh telling us where he was.

An enthusiastic follower of sport in many forms Vince's greatest love was tennis. He joined the Carmelite Tennis Club in Middle Park after he retired, although he had not played before that. He taught himself by taping, watching and analysing the great players. However, his main interest was the flight of the ball and how it reacted when struck. This explains why he was often to be seen practising on his own although his grandchildren loved playing with him.

We miss you Vince, your hearty laugh and your interest in the life of the Middle Park village.



## Middle Park schools

### *Nadia Wright*

Some readers might be surprised to know that the house they live in, or a house they know, was once a ladies' school. Middle Park had at least six ladies' schools, few compared to the Albert Park area which had at least 26. All small, they soon petered out as larger institutions offered better educational facilities and teaching. Like other small ladies' schools, they were run by women in either rented houses or public halls. After the 1905 Education Act set up a Registration Board to ensure that teachers and schools reached certain minimum standards these small schools sometimes struggled to comply.

The six schools were: the Middle Park Ladies' College, Erona College, Eloc College, and the schools run by Mrs Isabella Colyer, Miss Elsie MacAndrew and Miss Elizabeth Wright.

Mrs Louisa M. Gooch and her daughter Lucy ran the Middle Park Ladies' College in two rooms in a rented house at 64 Canterbury Road from 1895 to 1898. Despite the grand name it catered for only kindergarten and primary school pupils. In 1899 Mrs Marion A. Mitchell took over the school, assisted by Miss Maud E. Rymer. Soon, they shifted along the road to number 72. By 1904 the college had relocated to two rooms in Mrs Mitchell's home at 13 Langridge Street. The college's annual prize-givings followed by a concert put on by the girls took place at

**MIDDLE PARK**  
**Ladies' College,**  
64 CANTERBURY ROAD.

—  
PRINCIPALS—  
MRS. AND MISS GOOCH.

—

First Term begins Monday, February 3rd.  
Prospectuses on application.

Advertisement, *The Record* (Emerald Hill), 18  
February 1896, p. 2

The fifth concert and distribution of prizes of the Middle Park Ladies' College was held at Honeybone's Hall on Wednesday evening, when an excellent programme was well carried out by the pupils. A pleasing feature of the evening was a presentation to the principals, Mrs. Mitchell and the Misses Rymer, on behalf of the pupils. After the annual report had been read the chairman, the Rev. Nugent Kelly, distributed the prizes. Several prizes were donated to the college by the following ladies and gentlemen:—Mrs. Somerville, Mrs. Storey, Mrs. Mason, and Messrs. Leehof and Gerrard. The dux medal was presented by Mrs. Smith. The following are the names of the prize-winners:—Dux, T. Dunn; sixth class, T. Dunn, L. Storey, N. Addison; fifth class, M. Bray; upper fourth, N. Somerville, J. Mitchell, R. Davis, F. Mason, E. Vizard; lower fourth, B. Murie, N. Mitchell, D. Hunter, I. Thresher; third class, F. Mahon, N. Robertson; second class, B. Mahon, M. Somerville, M. Mitchell, R. Tayler; lower second, M. Copp, B. Matthews, E. Tytherleigh, R. Oliver, M. Hunter, L. Barnes, A. Thresher, B. Murie; first class, J. Cunningham, B. Pearce; primer class, D. Monteath, R. Sanderson, G. Weatherlie, N. Barnes; infants' class, R. Pearce, G. Coulter, A. Tytherleigh, J. Tonini; music, E. Vizard, F. Hall, A. Smith, E. Bishop, N. Elzam, D. Hunter, M. Bray.

From the Social Notes, *The Record* (Emerald Hill), 19 December 1903, p. 2



Honeybone's Hall in Neville Street, or sometimes the South Melbourne Town Hall. As was customary, they were written up in the press, and girls presented Mrs Mitchell with thank you gifts.

In May 1906 Middle Park Ladies' College was registered as school no. 493 with 33 day pupils from kindergarten to Merit level who were taught English, arithmetic, geography, French, algebra, history, calisthenics, class singing and sewing (plain and fancy). Somehow, Mrs Mitchell and Miss Rymer covered all these subjects. In July 1907 the school moved to 71 Paterson Street at the corner of Fraser Street.

In November that year, Miss Ethel Reed, who had run a school at Drouin, took over the college. In February 1908, when she was granted registration, Miss Reed had 19 kindergarten and infant pupils to whom she taught English, French, drawing, music, physical exercises and curiously, manual work. Miss Reed did not last long: in December 1908 she gave up the Middle Park Ladies' College, ending its 13-year life. It was acquired by Miss Marion W. Beetson who was running Erona College.

The Erona College and Kindergarten had been established by Miss Kelly in about 1898. Perhaps the name reflected her Irish background. By 1899 Miss Kelly was renting two classrooms in the Methodist schoolroom in Richardson Street, but soon sold the school to Miss Margaret M. Meston. Erona College catered for students up to Class IV, accepting boys in the junior classes. The press complimented Miss Meston on the musical performances by her students at the annual prize giving and concert.

In 1906 Erona College was registered as school no. 487 with 43 kindergarten and primary school pupils aged 5-11. Miss Meston was assisted by Miss Yatala E. Cole (a former dux of the school), and Miss A. Davies, who visited to teach elocution. Yet between them, and in only two classrooms, they taught reading, writing, spelling, recitation, composition, dictation, arithmetic, English, geography, history, scripture, physical exercises and drill, singing, music, needlework, elocution, knitting and sewing. One wonders how! After Miss Meston died suddenly in October 1908, Miss Marion Beetson

bought the goodwill of the school, but no trace of Erona College has been found after 1909.

In 1909 Miss Yatala E. Cole established her own school in two rooms in Honeybone's Hall, after making alterations to satisfy the Registration Board. The school was registered as no. 894 with 21 day pupils, and Miss Cole as the head teacher and proprietor. She taught reading, writing, geography, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, and history from kindergarten to Class VI.

Later in the year, she moved to the Presbyterian Church schoolroom in Armstrong Street, again making alterations after the Health Department informed her that the rooms were unsuitable as classrooms. No sooner were these completed when the Presbyterians gave up the building and shifted to Malvern. Undaunted, Miss Cole then moved back to Honeybone's Hall in 1910.

In 1911 the school was renamed Eloc College, and after a complaint by the Registration Board, Miss Cole amended her notice board stating the new name. The college closed in March 1913 and was removed from the Register that August, probably because Miss Cole had got married.

Then, the ever-vigilant Registration Board heard a report that Mrs Isabella Colyer was conducting a school at Honeybone's Hall. In December 1913, it informed her that she had to register her school, and comply with all regulations. By June 1914 she had done so.

However, in June 1917 Mrs Colyer sold the goodwill of her school to Miss Elsie D. MacAndrew who established a small preparatory school (no. 978). Miss MacAndrew had 20 day pupils ranging from toddlers to 7 year olds to whom she taught reading, writing and arithmetic. She ran the school for a short time before moving to another suburb.

Finally, Miss Elizabeth L. Wright, who had run a ladies' school in Carlton, established a small school at the Baptist Church Hall in Richardson Street in 1898, but this was short-lived.

Today nothing remains to indicate that these schools once existed in Middle Park, playing their small role in local education.

## MPAPHG General Meetings

At Middle Park Primary School (enter from Richardson Street)

**13 November 2023, 7.30 pm (AGM)**

**John Stirling**

Middle Park Primary School and  
the Hellas Soccer Club in the 1970–80s



The harsh Middle Park Primary School grounds in the 1970s

### Your MPAPHG committee

President:	Meyer Eidelson
Vice-President:	Vacant
Secretary:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Sonya Cameron
Liaison Officer	Diana Phoenix
Committee members:	Abramo Ierardo, Gary Poore