

MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter 11 July 2014



Photograph: Rose Stereograph Co. State Library of Victoria

ARCHITECTURAL ODDITIES IN MIDDLE PARK ~ PART 5

By Max Nankervis

Max delves into post WW 2 architectural styles that can be found throughout Middle Park, along with the characteristics of church buildings.

MODERNISM AND TFCBV

Post WW2, especially from 1950 on, Melbourne burgeoned with suburbs spreading out in all directions, especially to the east. As part of this development a local architectural style developed

In particular the fashion was to build a wooden frame base, with an outer skin of cream bricks, and as one indication of (higher) status was the number of "fronts" or facade surfaces. Thus, while double fronted was good, triple fronted was better. And so, in time, this style of development came to be a sobriquet (eventually with some negative connotation) *The Triple Fronted Cream Brick Veneer* (TFCBV). And just as Middle Park was developed in the fashionable Edwardian/Federation style of the early 20th century, the (now) middle suburbs proliferated with TFCBVs.

Middle Park (and surrounding areas) did not entirely escape this fashion phenomenon, though, because the vast majority of the housing stock was only about 50-60 years old - and thus not past its use-by date - and the vast majority of sites were already developed, few examples of the TFCBVs (or in the local case, due to the general narrowness of the sites, D<ouble>FCBV) emerged. Where they did emerge, it would appear they are generally on the site of demolished houses, probably wooden houses in poor repair. One such example can be seen on the SE corner of Hambleton and Wright streets, while a few others were "modernised" by having a new facade (and probably internal alterations/updates). A few other examples can be found in the small streets such as Neville St.



D<ouble>FCBV on corner of Hambleton and Wright Sts

Other forms of modernism architecture (as opposed to the "modern" style of the 1930s, following the Bauhaus/Corbusier style), can be seen in some blocks of low-rise apartments such as at 52 Canterbury Rd, or the SE corner of Harold and Erskine streets. But, for the same reason as the dearth of D/TFBVs, few apartment blocks were developed, in contrast to neighbouring St Kilda.



Post modern house at 328 Richardson St

POST MODERNISM

If modernism in its various forms, was the dominant post WW2 architectural style, the 1990s produced a style which came to be called 'postmodernism'. There are various academic discourses on just what constitutes postmodernism, and perhaps the simplest way to understand it is to see it as after modernism. But, in architectural terms the style involves using architectural elements in ways which overturn the accepted notions, and create what some may describe as "playful" or even ridiculous outcomes. While the concept appears to have its origins on the west coast of USA, it has also found traction in Europe, and, to a lesser extent, Australia. And, for the reasons noted above, of few development opportunities, and reasonably strict development controls, few examples have emerged in Middle Park.

(continued next page)

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POST MODERNISM (cont)

Despite this, there *are* some notable postmodern architectural examples. Perhaps the earliest is a single-fronted three storied terrace house at 328 Richardson St. This house sits beside, and melds in with its two architecturally elaborate, late Victorian neighbours. What it does is to take the key architectural *elements* of that pair - facade height, front gable, cast iron balcony with a rounded roof-line over the entrance, and express them as modern elements in what is clearly a new, infill building (it is built on the site of a single storey, single-fronted house which had been radically altered - probably in the 1950s - to look like a chocolate box). To the extent that it used the key elements in a new way, it might be described as postmodern.

A more decidedly postmodern example can be found just one block further north at 261 Richardson St. Here the playful, or unexpected use of the key elements in Middle Park Edwardian architecture is more clearly evident. The house with a form of polychrome bricks in bands across the facade, a projecting verandah, square (rather than half hexagon) bay windows, and with central gable, reflects many of the nearby houses, and the parapet and pediment, reflect something of its Victorian neighbours. Even the wrought iron front fence, in its whimsical curves, reflects the pickets prevalent in local fences.



261 Richardson St.

A third notable example is a recently completed house at 39 Harold St, on the site of a demolished block of (probably) 1950s, cream brick flats (for a time owned by the Nauruan Government). This house also defies the "norms" of domestic housing in so far as the wall lines are neither horizontal nor vertical, but run on angles, and the materials such as the side street screening are more like a picket fence than a side wall. The roof line is equally unpredictable.

While these houses represent the more recent styles of architecture, they are not necessarily to everyone's taste, and many argue are not in keeping with the 'heritage' style of Middle Park. But what they do show is that they are decidedly new architecture, and not a clumsy attempt at reproducing 19th century architecture in the 20th century.



39 Harold St

GODLINESS



Carmelite church on the corner of Wright and Richardson Sts.

While Australia might be seen to be one of the least religious western countries, with declining mainstream church attendance, from the 19th century until after WW2, church attendance and (nominal at least) adherence to a religion was strong. Thus all inner suburbs are littered with churches, both active and decommissioned. Middle Park is no exception. Over time there have been six or seven churches (and other-church institutions). There are also many sites which are recorded as being the home of religious leaders or perhaps places of worship. In 2013 only two remained open and active; the Catholic Carmelite Church in Richardson St (originally constructed about 1891, but extensively extended, and later remodelled in 1927), and the Baptist Church on the corner of Richardson St and Kerferd Rd, which appears to have operated since the 1880s as the site of a church. Three of the churches are now converted to residential units, St Anselms on the corner of Langridge St and Park Rd, and The Church of Christ and the Uniting (formerly Methodist) church, in Richardson St. Another church building at 151 Richardson St was demolished after a fire and is now a mini-park and terrace houses, while an extant building now used as an office at the rear of 36 Armstrong St was an early Methodist church, replaced by a larger one at 292 Richardson St (now apartments).



Baptist church located on the corner of Richardson St and Kerferd Rd.

Likewise, the former Good Shepherd Convent (or Magdalen Asylum) and Catholic primary school dominated Beaconsfield Pde until in the late 1970's when it was partly redeveloped as public housing, and later as private housing. Another Catholic school (formerly Christian Brothers Boys' School at 197 Danks St, incorporating the early grand house, *Montalto*), is now used by the Hare Krishna's organisation.

Next edition: Law and order & extensions

Oral History Committee news



The oral history meets bi-monthly before MPHG general meetings. The committee comprises Anne Miller, Diana Phoenix, Alison St John, Jackie Tidey and Annette Robinson.

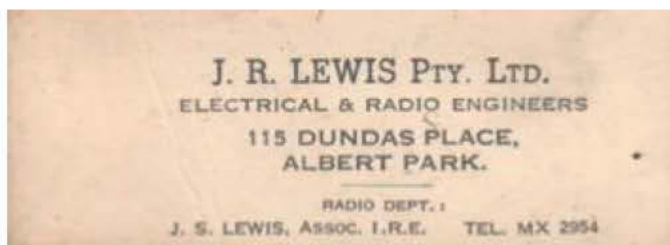
The group has been busy gearing up for another round of interviews with Middle Park residents.

Anne Miller recently interviewed Lily Junkovic, who came to Australia from her native Montenegro in the 1960's, and is full of praise for the new country in which she established her family's home. Lily is now in her mid seventies, and lives in her apartment on the Middle Park foreshore. We are grateful to Lily for giving us a marvellous insight into the migrant experience of mid last century. Anne has also interviewed Pat Brown who grew up in Middle Park, went to school and has lived her entire adult life on the waterfront. She has been very involved in the local community.

Annette Robinson first met Ken Lewis through the South Melbourne Garden Club 40 years ago. Ken is in his 90th year, and following in his father's footsteps he ran an electrical business in Albert Park, has lived all his life in Middle Park. Ken went to Middle Park State School, as did his two daughters, and grand-daughter. He speaks about his experiences as an apprentice during the war years when the American army was in Melbourne, and his father's firm was contracted to undertake work for them.

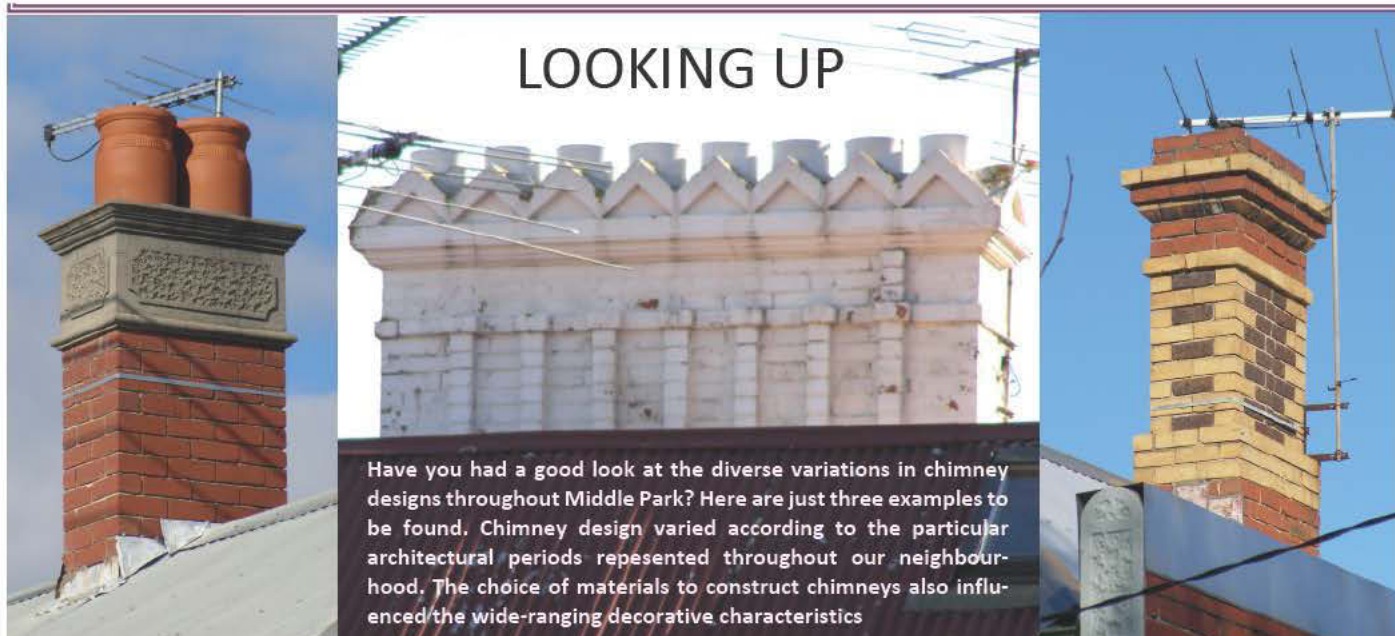


1965 photograph of Lily Junkovic soon after her arrival in Australia



J.R. Lewis business card: Note the telephone number: Ed

Keep an eye on our website www.middleparkhistory.org where completed interviews with Kath Bailey, Muriel Arnott, Mary Crean and Joe Younnis are already posted and will soon be joined by those mentioned above.





Last edition mystery object

This part-tiled wall is located at 253 Richardson St - just north of the Armstrong St shopping village.

The use of boldly coloured ceramic tiles was a common feature of the Art Deco style.



View of 235 Richardson St

KNOW YOUR STREET NAMES



BEACONSFIELD PARADE (Formerly Military Rd). Constructed in the mid 1860's.

Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield (1804 –1881) was an English statesman and literary figure. Disraeli served in British government for three decades, twice as Prime Minister (1868, 1875 -1880) – the first and only person of Jewish descent to do so, although Disraeli was baptised in the Anglican Church at an early age. Disraeli's most lasting achievement was the creation of the Conservative Party after the Corn Laws schism of 1846.

From 1852 onwards Disraeli's career was also marked by his intense rivalry with William Gladstone. In 1876 Disraeli was raised to the peerage as the Earl of Beaconsfield, after nearly four decades in the House of Commons.

Before and during his political career Disraeli was well-known as a literary and social figure, although his novels are not generally regarded as belonging to the first rank of Victorian literature. He mainly wrote romances, of which *Sibyl* and *Vivian Grey* are perhaps the best-known.

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.

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

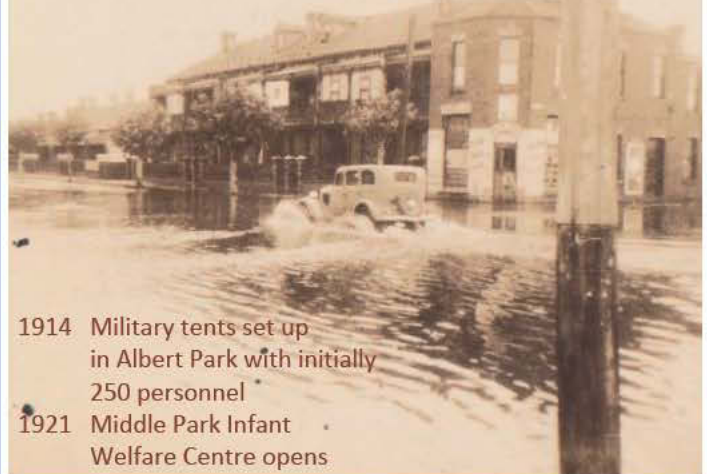


TAKING PHOTOS

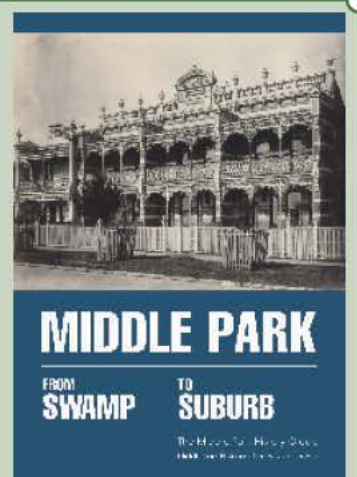
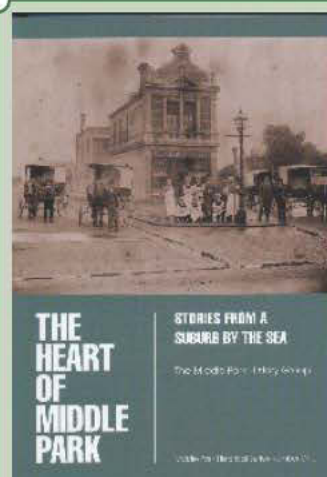
Now is a good time to photograph streetscapes while deciduous trees have shed their leaves. Be quick before Spring approaches.

It happened in:

Photograph of flood in Richardson St taken by Ron McDermott in 1941



- 1914 Military tents set up in Albert Park with initially 250 personnel
- 1921 Middle Park Infant Welfare Centre opens



OUTLETS WHERE OUR PUBLICATIONS ARE AVAILABLE
Armstrong St Village: Hot Honey, Armstrong St Deli, Victor's Dry Cleaners, Sweat, Middle Park Bowling Club
Albert Park: Avenue Bookstore

MEETING SCHEDULE: General Meeting: 4 August 2014 at the Middle Park Bowling Club

Committee meeting: 1 September 2014 **AGM:** 6 October 2014

Notification will be sent to you prior to the meeting listing agenda items and supporting documents

MPHG COMMITTEE: President John Stirling Vice President Meyer Eidleson Secretary David South Treasurer Sonya Cameron Public Officer Diana Phoenix & Rosemary Good