

MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP



Editorial

While the MPHG is still not able to meet, some of the committee have been busy. As Meyer reports, the museum program at the Middle Park Primary School began at the beginning of term 2 and classes are still involved with our group.

Sonya Cameron has been browsing local newspapers to see what was happening here 100 years ago. The article also features the local primary

school. Sonya and Lynsey Poore report on what remains of the students' activities today.

Sonya has found another famous Australian born in Middle Park. I wonder if he ever landed at the airport once not far from us, in Port Melbourne.

Gary Poore

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

Email: middleparkhistorygroup@gmail.com

Website: www.middleparkhistory.org

Newsletter editor : Gary Poore

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101 years ago

Arbor Day 1920

Lynsey Poore and Sonya Cameron

Many of us older citizens will remember when we were in primary school the event of Arbor Day. What is Arbor Day? It literally translates to tree day from the latin arbor and is a day that celebrates the planting, upkeep and preservation of trees, and it is celebrated all over the globe. The date is usually in spring but the date varies depending on the climate and a suitable planting season. For instance Arbor Day is celebrated in Australia on 20 June but each state has its own Arbor Day while Arbor Week is observed in Victoria as suggested by the then Premier Dick Hamer in the 1980s.

The first Arbor Day in Australia was in 1889. The origin of the day dates back to the early 1870s in Nebraska City where Julius Morton proposed a day that would encourage all Nebraskans to plant trees in their community so Arbor Day was born.

The plane trees that the Middle Park Primary School planted in Mills Street 100 years ago are not there now but other examples are present along most of Richardson Street. These European trees have been replaced some time last century by four other species.

On the corner of Richardson Street and Mills Street is a 'Snow in Summer', or *Melaleuca linariifolia*, an endemic species from NSW and Qld. Next to it is lilly-lilly, *Syzygium smithii*, with its reddish berries. This species is found in the wild from Qld to Wilsons Promontory in eastern Victoria. Next is a brush box, *Lophostemon conferta*, native to northern NSW and Qld. These three are native to Australia but the large tree closest to Neville Street is a coral tree, a species of *Erythrina*. This comes from the tropics and is often planted in public places because of its impressive 'cock's comb' red flowers.



Snow in summer



Coral tree flower

ARBOR DAY.

MILLS STREET SCHOOL.

Pupils of the State school in Mills street, Middle Park, celebrated Arbor Day on Friday morning of last week by planting five Oriental plane trees in that thoroughfare.

For the event the scholars were paraded by the head master, Colonel J. McShane, to the roll of drums and sounding of bugles by the school's own drum and bugle band. To form themselves into a party of foresters a small company of the scholars fell out of the ranks. These young woodsmen and woodswomen set up the babytrees under the expert direction of the chief municipal gardener, Mr. Donald Forbes.

Very highly interested witnesses of the proceedings were the Mayor (Cr. E. A. Wells) and the town clerk (Mr. E. C. Crockford).

Prevailed upon by Colonel McShane to grace the occasion with a short address, the Mayor said that he was indeed pleased to be present. To inculcate in the young a love of flowers and trees, among beautiful things, was an action on the part of the Education authorities which they had reason to be proud. In cultivating in the developing minds of the boys and girls of South Melbourne a very active fondness for the exquisite in the works of Nature, the council would, as far as it could go, co-operate with the people responsible for the enlightenment of the young. A cult for beauty was desirable in folk of all ages, but in the growing generation it was needed most of all. The influence of the exquisite was a powerful factor in the making of people good citizens. The council recognised that in a very practical manner by beautifying the municipality with public parks and gardens wherever it could find spaces along broad roadways, or on Crown lands entrusted to the city, for such embellishment. It was the duty of the citizens to defend those beauty places and popular resorts against destruction by thoughtless individuals of adult age. Likewise was it the duty of boys and girls when they saw other young people damaging the flowers and shrubs in the public gardens to stop them, or, if they felt unable to do so, because, perhaps, the Vandals might be stronger, to appeal at once to someone older who could drive away the transgressors. At play boys

to someone else who could drive away the transgressors. At play boys and girls should not allow their games to take them scampering over flower beds to the danger of the plants. If they must enter upon a flower bed or a shrubbery to recover a ball thrown wild in play or a hat blown by the wind among the blooms, let them do so with the greatest care not to make any damage. The expansion of public gardens in South Melbourne had been by no means inconsequential. Perhaps not pretentious things now, these things planted to-day would in the years before us grow into mighty trees. Passing this spot decades ahead, people would point to the trees and say, "Well can we remember as boys and girls planting them on Arbor Day along with Mr. McShane."

As a small boy himself in South Melbourne at the time, he (the Mayor) could remember St. Vincent's Gardens when they consisted only of a field and some pine trees. Now they were a place of beauty in which were assembled thousands of fragrant flowers and scores of ornamental trees of varying foliage, but withal beautiful. In other parts of the city, wherever they could lay out for the pleasure of the people public garden plots and grassy resorts enclosed in lines of handsome trees, the councillors had done so. As more opportunities would present themselves for the extension of this work, the corporation would avail itself of them. The councillors' dearest wish in this regard was to have South Melbourne second to no other city. To have been present at this important event in the lives of his young friends, and one more of many developmental steps in the adornment of the municipality, afforded him indeed a very large measure of real pleasure.

At the call of the headmaster the scholars gave three rousing cheers for the Mayor.

That trees could thrive for centuries Colonel McShane reminded the scholars when he said that oaks flourishing to-day in England were planted by the men of Saxon Harold.

Before he left the school building the Mayor expressed gratification at the improvements to the surrounding play grounds made under the direction of Mr. Aughtie, the city engineer.

At noon the scholars dispersed for the half-holiday.

Who's been living in my house?

Charles Ulm — Aviator

Sonya Cameron

Have you often wondered if someone famous has lived in your house in Middle Park? As part of an occasional series we will write about these people - and we would welcome further suggestions or contributions from our readers.

Charles Thomas Philippe Ulm was born on 18 October 1889. At the time of his birth his parents were living at **5 Mills Street** (now 6 Mills Street after renumbering took place in 1901). Although he only lived there for two years (his parents moved to Caulfield), he still has a connection to our suburb.

He was the third son of Emile Gustave Ulm, a Parisian-born artist, and his Victorian wife Ada Emma (née Greenland). On 16th September 1914 he joined the AIF under the name 'Charles Jackson', as he was underage – his height of 183cm probably helped disguise his young age! He was amongst the first troops to land at Gallipoli. Later in April 1915 he was wounded

and returned to Australia where he was discharged at his parents' request (being a minor). He re-enlisted in January 1917 but was wounded on the Western Front in July 1918 and evacuated to Britain.

Charles was captivated with the possibilities of commercial aviation and backed several short-lived aviation companies. In 1927 he joined Sir Charles Kingsford Smith in circumnavigating Australia in a Bristol Tourer in 10 days, 5 hours - halving previous records. Both men were awarded the Air Force Cross for the first trans-Pacific flight from the USA to Australia in 1928. Later that year, they made the first trans-Tasman flight from Sydney to Christchurch, New Zealand. In December 1928 Kingsford Smith and Ulm formed Australian National Airlines to operate as a passenger, mail and freight service. A.N.A. was liquidated in 1933 but in September 1934 Ulm established a new company, Great Pacific Airways, to operate between San Francisco and Sydney. In December 1934 Ulm,



Charles with his parents (NLA)

with a crew of two, commenced a flight from Oakland to Hawaii. Bad weather caused them to fly past Hawaii and, running low on fuel, he ditched into the sea. Despite an extensive search, no trace of the men or the plane was ever found.

The following quote from the Australian Dictionary of Biography sums up the personality of Charles Ulm:

“With dark brown, curly hair and an olive complexion that indicated his French ancestry, Ulm was regarded with considerable affection by those who worked with him.

A practical visionary with a keen sense of humour, he displayed drive, energy, extraordinary precision in thought and courage in adversity. It was his responsibility to arrange the financial and administrative aspects of his flights with Kingsford Smith and his organization was impeccable.”

Extensive biographies have been written on Charles Ulm. This brief article might encourage you to read more about him.

The house of his birth, 6 Mills Street, has since been demolished. It was timber cottage, built about 1882. In 1902 Grey’s Steam Laundry was built next door at 8–14 Mills Street. Ulm’s house had a succession of occupants and is listed as being occupied by Henry Grey in 1912 and 1913, but no occupier is listed in Sands & McDougall after that date. The house appears to have remained unchanged until it was photographed as part of the Committee for Urban Action photographic project in the early 1970s. Both the house and the laundry were demolished in the late 1980s and a series of modern town-houses now takes their place.

6 Mills Street, Middle Park, early 1970s



Charles Kingsford Smith and Charles Ulm in flying suits, 1929 (NLA)



COPP World War 2 commemorations – Through childhood eyes: hidden stories of World War 2

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the end of World War Two. Collecting community stories of the war is a meaningful way to commemorate this significant anniversary. The City of Port Phillip wants to capture living memories of how World War Two impacted on young people in our City.

The City is seeking older residents of the City who would be interested in sharing their childhood recollections of the war years, and also seeking school age young people to participate by reading these stories. Further information can be found on:

https://heritage.portphillip.vic.gov.au/Whats_on/World_War_Two_commemorations

Or contact:

artheritage@portphillip.vic.gov.au

or ring 9209 6496.



Committee For Urban Action Photographic Collection

These long awaited images are now available online through the State Library of Victoria. The statement below from the SLV gives the background to this project:

“In the 1970s, concerned by the destruction of Victoria’s building heritage, a group called the Committee for Urban Action (CUA) photographed an extraordinary number of streetscapes in inner-city Melbourne and regional towns. The huge collection of more than 2000 reels of 35mm film – over 70,000 photographs in all – was donated to the Library by Barbara Nevin on behalf of the CUA in 1977.

A vast Google-style photographic survey, the CUA streetscapes capture inner-city and regional architecture in the late 20th century. The details in these images offer a rich record of urban life

and form the basis of the heritage overlays still used in town planning today.

Our 2014 Annual Appeal raised funds to make this amazing legacy accessible to an even wider audience of students, artists and historians.”

In December 2015 The Middle Park History Group made a donation of \$5000.00 to this project with the agreement that the first set of images to be digitised would be those of Middle Park. The negatives have been digitised over a number of years and only now have they become available to download.

To search for your house, or any building you are interested in, go to the State Library of Victoria website – www.slv.vic.gov.au. The following instructions are an example of searching for a building in Middle Park:

Type “middle park” (make sure you use inverted commas to limit your search to this phrase) NB - you can narrow your search by adding the name of the street in the search box – e.g. “middle park” AND “Nimmo”.

Select ‘Pictures & photographs’ from the drop down box, then click search.

On the results page, on the right under ‘Refine Results by ...’ scroll down and select ‘Committee for Urban Action’ under Author/Creator.

The results of the search will be displayed street by street, from intersection to intersection,

and by side of the street (north, south, east, west)

Click on ‘see all items’ (top line above the street names) and thumbnails of the images in that strip will displayed

Click on ‘available online’ for the image you want to download, and a box will appear allowing you to download the image in either a low res format (jpg) or a high res format (tiff).

NB – this is a work in progress and not all images are online yet

MPHG President’s Report

I hope this newsletter finds all our members well and meeting the combined challenges of 2020. Members are welcome to share with us their personal experiences during this historic time for inclusion in our newsletters. With the recent resurgence of COVID cases it is uncertain when we will all meet again in person, but our history projects continue in some form or other.

This time may be an opportunity for members to record their own personal memories of Middle Park or those of relatives, neighbours or friends with important stories to tell.

Our Children History Projects continue at the Middle Park Primary School. Last term the students had returned to school and were working enthusiastically on designing a Middle Park Museum based in the school hall, including learning how to catalogue historical items. The teachers reported that the students were also fascinated by the nineteen personal histories on our website.

www.middleparkhistory.org/personal-histories

With new COVID restrictions, the students have now returned to distance education so are now working towards our History Competition as

this can be done from home. This competition invites all students to submit a story and picture about a significant building, public space or person from Middle Park. Our group will provide thirty book vouchers for the best submissions as well as a grant to the school library to purchase history books.

Our Publications Committee continues to work on chapters of our new history book of Albert Park. Members are welcome to send contributions.

We have also had two enthusiastic volunteers designing a new walking flyer based on historic industries of Middle Park.

In 2011 former deputy premier John Thwaites launched our film documentary on DVD *The Heart of Middle Park*. The filmmaker Joe Eidelson, has now generously put it online to make easier for the public to view:

<https://youtu.be/VmDtAgcuPnI>

Stay safe and well,

Meyer Eidelson

President, Middle Park History Group

MPHG meeting schedule 2020

Sadly all meetings for the foreseeable future are postponed. We will let you know when we can meet again.

The committee had planned to have Dr Sophie Couchman speak on **Mee How Ah Muoy – Architect** and with luck this be our first speaker when normal life resumes.



Mystery object

The challenge in April was to identify the jelly-like object common in late summer on Middle Park beach. Wrong if you guessed jelly fish! Jelly fish do wash up on our beach but this ring-shape translucent jelly is the egg mass of a moon snail. A dead shell is pictured below. Moon snails are abundant near and below low tide on the sand where they plough through the sand leaving a grooved trail. The eggs are tiny, almost invisible and embedded in the jelly until they hatch as baby snails.

Your MPHG committee

President:	Meyer Eidelson
Vice-President:	Vacant
Secretary:	Vacant
Treasurer:	Sonya Cameron
Liaison officer:	Diana Phoenix
Committee members:	Tony Liston, Gary Poore