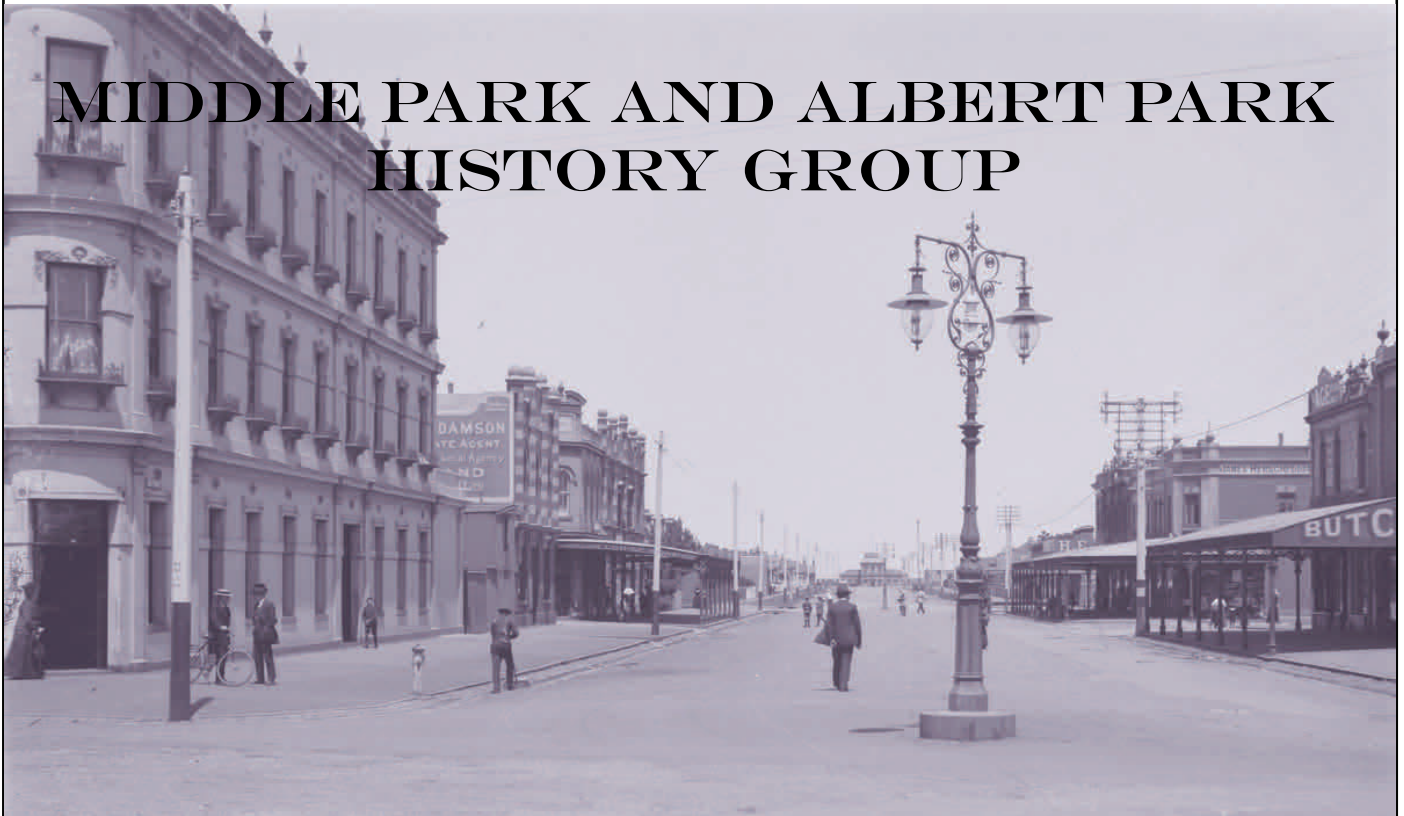


# MIDDLE PARK AND ALBERT PARK HISTORY GROUP



## Editorial

I am happy to record that our latest publication of the newly expanded and named Middle Park and Albert Park History Group, *Albert Park – Gardens to the Sea* is selling well at the Avenue Bookshop and by MPAPHG itself. If you are not one of the 300 plus owners of the book you are missing a treat. The book is number 4 on the list of most frequent loans from the CPP library. The group donated a set of books to the Friends of Suai Covalima (Timor Leste) Trivia Night and raised a significant contribution.

In this newsletter, Sonya Cameron has dug up a news item about a factory fire that connects to

Melbourne's music industry. Also included is the seventh of eight episodes of Vin Kane's life. Sadly he died in January.

The talk and date for our May meeting has now been changed. Rob Youl will speak on the history of Gasworks Park on 8 May. Details can be found on the last page of this newsletter. I am still on the lookout for items for the newsletter. Albert Park hasn't been covered in the previous 45 issues! And the committee is still seeking members, especially from Albert Park.

*Gary Poore*

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## 100 years ago – February 1923

### FIRE AT ALBERT PARK.

#### Austral Confectionery Company's Factory.

Overheating of the gas ovens at the Austral Confectionery Company's factory in Dundas-place, Albert Park, on Tuesday night caused a fire that severely damaged the ovens and their contents, and slightly damaged the chocolate room on the first floor of the factory. The factory is a brick building of two and three stories, and the gas ovens on the first floor are used in the manufacture of chocolate confectionary. On the first signs of the outbreak the fire brigade was notified by telephone, and strong detachments from the Port Melbourne and South Melbourne fire stations arrived in time to prevent the flames from spreading. Helped materially by a good pressure of water, they soon had the fire under control.

Mr. F. Searle is manager for the company. The building is owned by Mr. W. Crosby, and is insured with the Royal Insurance Company for £2000, the machinery and contents of the factory being insured in the same company for £9000.



Whilst this fire in Albert Park, 100 years ago, is not remarkable in itself, it does point to the existence of a light industrial past in Albert Park. The address of this chocolate manufacturer, Austral Confectionery, was initially listed as being at 49 and 51a Dundas Place – but there are no two and three storey buildings at that address nor elsewhere in the residential part of that street. It was not until 1966 that it was listed under its current and true address – 9 Dundas Lane (just behind the Albert Park Medical Centre at 51 Dundas Place).

The former factory was built about 1914 and consisted of a two-storey and a three-storey brick building as can be seen in the 1974 photo above. It was occupied by a bakehouse until 1919 when it became Austral Confectionery, owned by William Crosby & Co., a large merchant company which in 1917 had bought the Ballarat company Sunshine Biscuits, manufacturers of high class biscuits, chocolate confectionery and cakes. It traded in Dundas Lane under the name of Austral Confectionery until 1963 when it

reverted to the name Sunshine Biscuits and remained there until 1973. The company closed in 1991.

After Sunshine Biscuits moved out, a film production company occupied the two buildings. *Snapshot*, Sigrid Thornton's first feature film, was made there and some scenes show the interior of the building and the surrounding laneways. The film can be found on YouTube.

In 1979 Michael Gudinski purchased 9 Dundas Lane and the building became the home of the Mushroom Group, incorporating Mushroom Records and Mushroom Music Publishing. The building is mostly unchanged – the French windows on the upper level of the two-storey building have been replaced and of the two internal staircases, only one remains.

A wander up the lane will give you a better view of this former factory.

*Sonya Cameron*

Article from *The Age (Melbourne)*, 1 February 1923, p. 1

## Vincent Kane

### Part 7 : It's off to work we go, sent to Gippsland and back home

I began the first term of the Leaving Certificate class at St Kevin's in February 1944.

I was still only thirteen, and although we didn't have settled classes at St Kevin's - students moved around to lectures from subject to subject - it seemed to me that the student body I encountered was considerably older than I was. If I understand the structure of this elite secondary college in Toorak correctly, had I remained there and passed all the examinations (a very unlikely event) I could have matriculated at age fifteen, ready to seek entry to university!

This was a well nigh impossible scenario on all counts, academically but especially financially. However, during that first term, on 4 March, I sat for the examination for the position of Telegraph Messenger in the Postmaster General's Department. I passed twelfth in the State. I completed the first term at St Kevin's, but then left to commence work, on 29 May 1944 aged fourteen years and three months.

I wrote to Br Williams to tell him that I had left St Kevin's and sent him ten shillings as a gift from my first pay - I would have been advised by my mother - and received a warm letter in reply, which I still have. Seventeen years later I saw Br Williams in the visitors' gallery at Parliament House in Canberra and spoke to him. He may not have recognised me as his 'cheerful helper' from the past!

When signing up for entry to the Commonwealth Public Service, the Personnel Officer asked me to state whether I would be retiring at age sixty or sixty-five! This was because the necessary deduction for superannuation had to be made from my fortnightly pay. At that time, pay for Telegraph Messengers was £86 per annum.

I started at the Moonee Ponds Post Office, delivering telegrams on the Post Office bike in the winter of 1944. It wasn't an easy induction to my working career. There were two difficult features in the landscape of the Moonee Ponds delivery area. One was the far flung suburb of Aberfeldie where street names were unfamiliar, and the other was the large area of the Moonee Valley racecourse which presented an obstacle that I had to ride my bike around, not through.

Fortunately for me, after six months the Postmaster (Mr Rankin) became concerned that I had to travel 'all the way' from Middle Park to Moonee Ponds (in fact he said to me that I wouldn't have time to say my morning prayers) so he arranged for me to transfer to the Albert Park Post Office, which was only about a mile from my home in Middle Park.

After I had left school, I still went to confession



monthly - as did most of the Catholic faithful at the time. There were always two to three pews in Mt Carmel Church filled with penitents at 7.00pm on a Saturday night. We would shuffle along, waiting patiently for our turn to go into the confessional, but sometimes there might be 'queue hoppers', like the occasion when two air hostesses, dressed in their uniform, sneaked in ahead of us. I suppose we forgave them as they had a plane to catch.

I found it less stressful to avoid Fr Gerhard in the confessional when one evening, after having given me absolution, he slid three pence across and asked me to go down to the newsagency and buy him the Sporting Globe (Melbourne's well known sporting weekly, printed on vivid pink paper, and published late on Saturday). Returning with the paper, I waited until a break occurred in penitents entering and leaving the confessional, and then knocked on the door to Father's own section, and passed the paper in. Apparently this was a regular weekly procedure during the football season - Father was keen to know the final scores.

The year or so at Albert Park Post Office had been quite eventful, in part due to the thousands of American servicemen who occupied the nearby South Melbourne Football Ground. Their canteen was well stocked with all sorts of exotic chocolates and chewing gum, and the Americans were very generous to the kids who hung around

the entrance to the ground. Others who found the soldiers an attraction were certain ladies and their madams who quickly moved into many of the larger houses in the vicinity, especially in St Vincent's Place, these days a much sought after high class residential area.

Sometimes a telegram would arrive for delivery to someone in these establishments, and there would then be a scramble among the older messengers for the 'privilege' of taking it to the addressee. Less favoured were telegrams from the Defence Department notifying the next of kin of the death, or serious injury, or 'missing-in-action' of a serviceman.

The end of the war in Europe occurred while I was at Albert Park. The Federal Government immediately declared a public holiday for that day and the next. I was instructed by the Postmaster (Mr Cameron) to close the doors of the Post Office which I did, with some difficulty, because that day happened to be pension day. In those years pensions were paid in cash at Post Office counters.

The old age pensioners were justifiably upset that they wouldn't be able to get their pension for another two days.

That evening Ted Maslem (a Telegraph Messenger at Albert Park, about my own age) and I went into the city. The streets were awash with celebrating, noisy, rejoicing people. Ted was a quiet and somewhat timid boy, of Dutch extract. He and his mother had escaped from the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) as the Japanese troops invaded. Ted clearly found the crowds in Melbourne rather intimidating, because he took a firm hold of my hand and wouldn't let go, and so we walked around the city hand in hand.

### **Sent to Gippsland**

Early in August 1945, with the encouragement of my father (and I suspect the misgivings of my mother) I agreed to a request to transfer 'temporarily' to the Traralgon Post Office. The notice advising of the 'temporary transfer' opportunity stated that it would be for a period of 'not less than six weeks'. In Gippsland at that time there was a severe shortage of labour, due mainly to the effects of the war, but also to the re-opening of the Maryvale Paper Mill (paying wages well in excess of the Post Office).

Believing that the 'temporary' transfer to Traralgon would be only for a few months or so, my mother had given me a small suitcase to send my dirty clothes home to be washed and returned.

The Victorian Railways operated a cheap passenger train freight service in these years (nine pence between Traralgon and Middle Park railway stations). The service was very reliable - during the three and a half years that the little suitcase travelled backwards and forwards on the railways it was never once lost or damaged or delayed.

Every few weeks, I would send the full case of dirty clothes home, and it would be returned within a few days, with my clothes all freshly washed and ironed, and always with some food from the shop, such as a seasoned baked

rabbit, or a couple of pasties. This procedure went on for all the time I was in Traralgon - I never so much as washed a handkerchief or a pair of socks, although I did press my trousers occasionally under the mattress.

I did manage to get home for Christmas each year. In December 1945, because I wasn't able to finish my mail deliveries on Christmas Eve in time to catch the regular Melbourne train, I was 'invited' to join a train load of empty carriages that was leaving Traralgon in the early hours of Christmas morning. I was warned to alight as soon as the metropolitan network was reached, otherwise I might be transported to the Newport railway yards, and left there until after Christmas. I followed the instructions and got home safely.

The years I spent away from home, living as a boarder in the Traralgon Coffee Palace, (sharing a room with three other young men) are another story, well described, well documented, and for the most part, well covered in pictures in my book.

Sufficient to say that these were formative years for me. I developed and participated in many interests, such as tennis, cricket, football, badminton, basketball, cards (euchre, 500, solo) dances and investments with the resident SP bookie. I fished for eels and trout, and freshwater crayfish in the Traralgon Creek, and rode my bike through the mountains to Walhalla, over forestry trails and old abandoned corduroy roads.

I was a member (and in one case the convenor) of two active social clubs - St Michaels and the Coffee Palace - and although I have recorded that I had no interest in girls - nor they in me - I have to acknowledge that towards the end of my time in Traralgon I met a young lady (Patricia, four years my senior) who later became my wife of 65 years.

### **Sent back Home**

It was a carefree life, but it came to an end suddenly in the space of a few minutes early one morning in 1949. I was at work, sorting the mail ready for delivery when the Morse code machine came to life and began to tap out a message, at the end of which the Postmaster, Mr Heeps, jumped out of his chair, came over to me and said 'You are going back to Melbourne'. It seems that my mother had been applying pressure on PMG Headquarters and they had finally given in, and agreed to send me home.

I can't recall the actual date when I left Traralgon. As I didn't have many possessions, only a few clothes and a bike, it wouldn't have required much time to pack. Soon after my arrival back home, at my mother's insistence I enrolled at Hasset's Business College in Chapel St Prahran to start the first term of study at night school for the 'October Clerical', the exam that would open the way for entry to the Third Division of the Australian Public Service.

I had been assigned to the Malvern Post Office, to be placed on the relieving staff. I didn't have a fixed place of work - I went to different Post Offices, clearing letters

from posting boxes and the coin receptacles from public telephones, selling stamps at Post Office counters, sorting mail for despatch, and after two weeks training, working at night with a number of other young men attending to calls on Melbourne's Central Telephone Exchange which was still a manual exchange.

Two events of this period stand out. At the Sandringham Post Office I became friendly with a staff member who was 'hooked' on tandem cycles, so we would spend our lunch hour hurtling up and down Beach Road on his tandem. He was getting into shape to ride tandem with his wife to Perth, across the Nullarbor Plain.

The other event was not so pleasant. I caught the driver of the van who used to transport me to the various public telephones stealing the pennies out of the tins while I was away at the next box. I told him to stop, but there was a confrontation when we got back to the Malvern Post Office. After the driver had hurried in to use the toilet, the cistern was found to be full of pennies, so the Postmaster called the District Inspectors, who took the driver away for questioning.

At a social level, I played tennis, cricket, football and billiards as a member of Mt Carmel Catholic Young Men's Society, and I resumed my attendance at the 8-30 Sunday Mass.

I took on the job of Secretary/Manager of the Middle Park CYMS football team. We played in the western suburbs league that included places like Williamstown and Broadmeadows. I looked after the registration of players, the jumpers, transport on the day to the venue (as no-one had a car, we used a furniture van because it was cheap) and I would provide the three-quarter time stimulant - sometimes a cordial drink called O.T. and occasionally, on a particularly cold day, a tot of rum.

We rarely had a full eighteen players, but occasionally it was possible to find an onlooker or a passer-by, sometimes the driver of the furniture van to pull on a jumper and sign the team sheet with a name I would give him. A suspended South Melbourne player took the field for us once.

While I was the Manager, I had a set of jumpers made for our team, and later, with some financial support from the Carmelite Fathers, I got club blazers designed and manufactured. They were tailored from a brown woollen material, and there was a splash of gold and blue on the pockets. The rag trade in Flinders Lane was just starting to be competitive again after the war, so the prices were good. We wore the blazers at every opportunity, especially at the 'end of year' celebrations at Corio Bay.

Communion Breakfasts for trade and industry groups were a big thing in Melbourne in the 50s. This initiative was associated with Catholic Action in its endeavour to

provide a counter to the influence of the Communist Party in key unions at the time. Catholics (as well as any other interested men or women) employed in the railways, tramways, post office, fire brigade, retail establishments, and so on, had an annual function which consisted of Sunday Mass in St Francis church in Lonsdale St, followed by breakfast at the Myer Mural Hall opposite. There would be a guest speaker, usually a notable Catholic layman, perhaps Denys Jackson, and sometimes a Melbourne priest.

I attended the Post Office employees Mass and breakfast on 27 May 1951. The scheduled speaker, a priest who had been a chaplain during the war, was late. He apologised and explained that he had spent the night at the Heidelberg Military hospital at the bedside of Field Marshall Sir Thomas Blamey who before he passed away, had asked to see a Catholic priest.

My few months at the Central Telephone Exchange were interesting, to say the least. The idea of putting young men to work there at night turned out to be a spectacular failure. Although there was a supervisor on duty, the only function he seemed to perform was to make us close all the large windows of the building in order to keep the damp night air away from the electro-magnetic exchange equipment. We only saw him again when it was time to send a few of us down to Elizabeth St to pick up free copies of the Argus newspaper.

During the rest of the long night, some of the more enterprising young men found their way into the canteen to sample the chocolates, they took dinner plates to the roof of the Telephone Exchange building and spun them into the air to land on the Lonsdale St footpath opposite, and there was prolonged fraternisation with the girls who worked the International calls section of the telephone exchange.

Perhaps the most imaginative and least harmful prank was when we were given the records of reported 'wrong numbers' for which we had to mark a rebate against the account of the telephone subscriber who had complained of getting a wrong number. We extended the range and marked rebates against the telephone numbers of our relatives, friends and acquaintances,

Generally, however, I was far from idle during this time of work and night school. In addition to my CYMS duties, I still helped my father in the shop. On one memorable occasion when, having changed to a new supplier (in Rushworth) of dressed poultry for the Christmas orders, the twenty or so chooks and ducks he had ordered arrived by rail at Spencer St station not at all 'dressed' but rather alive and well in open crates! The train journey back to Middle Park with the noisy poultry was quite an ordeal, while the execution, plucking and 'dressing' of the birds took all night.

## Vale Vincent Kane

Vin Kane OAM, whose seventh of eight contribution to the MPAPHG newsletter appears on the previous pages, died in January 2023. He was 93. He died in Calvary Hospital in Canberra due to complications from a long-term aneurism. His passing was quick and relatively painless as up to Christmas he was in excellent health and still living at home and volunteering his time amongst the Canberra community. He had seven kids and we will miss him.

The Canberra Times published a full page obituary of his life and achievements in the weeks following his death which can be read by CTR-clicking [here](#).

Vin was extremely proud of his heritage growing up on the streets of Middle Park and his life-long passion for South Melbourne Football Club was ample evidence of this.

Kindest regards,

Bernard Kane (son)

## Vale Pat Grainger

It is with immense sadness and very heavy hearts that the Port Melbourne Historical & Preservation Society inform friends and members of the passing of Pat Grainger, OAM.

To many, Pat was the Historical Society!

Her presence has been missed in recent times as she stepped back from week-to-week involvement in the Society's affairs but we could always expect a correction from Pat if we let any mistakes slip through as well as a pertinent reminder of something we had missed in our planning.

Pat died in hospital on Sunday, 19 March 2023. MPAPHG sends its condolences and best wishes to Pat's family and mourn the passing of another Port stalwart.

Source : Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society eBulletin



## Mystery object?

The mystery object is not especially of Middle Park or Albert Park but certainly was of interest to their residents in 1902. As might something similar be this month in 2023.

## President's Report

Autumn is a beautiful time of year in Middle Park and Albert Park. We have sufficient deciduous trees to walk through avenues of fluttering colour and shuffle through gutters of painted fallen leaves. Thanks to our green-thumbed member, Lynsey Poore, an enthusiastic crowd was led on a tour through St Vincent Gardens in March. We learned from Lynsey for example that many of these rare trees were planted in pairs, that the Mexican Evergreen Oak *Quercus rugosa* is the only oak tree of its kind in Australia and that the name she-oak for Australian casuarinas denotes timber inferior to the true English oak.

A big thanks also to our members who attended the Albert Park Primary School Fete to support parents in gathering history and to sell several copies of our books. 2023 is the school's 150th anniversary and we are assisting them in their celebration.

Our newest book *Albert Park – Gardens to the Sea* is selling like hotcakes. Gary Poore presented on part of the book content at a well-attended event organised by the Emerald Hill Library and Heritage Centre in February.

The indefatigable (yes note that word for Scrabble victory) Sonya Cameron and Gary Poore have already convened a meeting of potential authors for the next volume on Albert Park. Many fine local historians have signed up to write chapters on schools, architecture, theatres and notable buildings.

We have created a new membership flyer and are planning to use it for a renewed membership drive during the course of this year. All those members offering to expend shoe-leather for this purpose are very welcome.

Regards  
Meyer Eidelson



Mexican Evergreen Oak *Quercus rugosa* in St Vincent Gardens

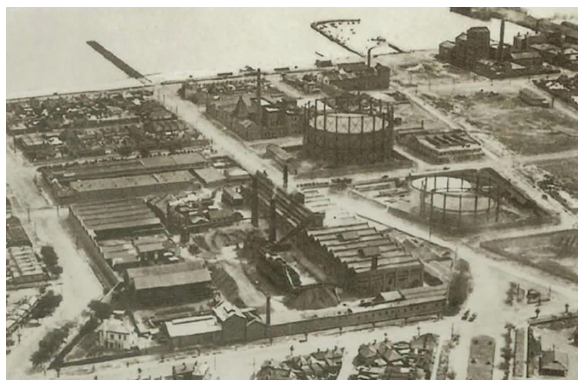
## MPAPHG General Meetings

At Middle Park Primary School (enter from Richardson Street)

**8 May 2023, 7.30 pm NOTE CHANGE OF DATE**

**Rob Youl : South Melbourne Gasworks – Piecing the story together**

The next MPAPHG book on Albert Park will include a chapter on South Melbourne Gasworks by long-time South Melbourne residents Rob Youl and Judi Solomon. Rob will speak at the meeting on sources, memories, impressions and artefacts that have been part of this process. It also seems likely the audience will have useful comments and maybe even new insights into the subject. Rob and Judi also do monthly bird surveys of the park and its general neighbourhood.



**4 September 2023, 7.30 pm**

**Jenny Sinclair** (author) : A Walking Shadow. Edward Oxford, well known resident of Albert Park with a secret past as an attempted assassin of Queen Victoria

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

**John Stirling** : Middle Park Primary School in the 1970s and a proposal for a mega soccer stadium in Albert Park Reserve

### Your MPAPHG committee

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