

MIDDLE PARK HISTORY GROUP Newsletter 14 April 2015



Photograph: Rose Stereograph Co. State Library of Victoria

Flora of Middle Park

This is the second 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.

The London Plane

Richardson Street is a wide street lined with London Plane trees and is the epitome of everything that is attractive about Middle Park. According to the City of Port Phillip there are 407 London Plane trees in the suburb where they also grace Page, Armstrong and Nimmo streets among others. The species is the most common species grown in the city and continues to be planted.

The London Plane, *Platanus x acerifolia*, is a large deciduous tree resulting from a cross between two related



London Plane trees in Richardson Street, January

species. The American Plane (*Platanus occidentalis*) is a native of the eastern US where it is called the Sycamore. The Oriental Plane (*Platanus orientalis*) occurs naturally in Eurasia from the Balkans to at least as far east as Iran. The hybrid was first recorded in Spain in the 17th century, where *P. orientalis* and *P. occidentalis* had been planted in proximity to one another. The leaf and flower characteristics are intermediate between the two species. *Acerifolia* means the leaves are like those of maple trees.

The tree has for a long time been very much a feature of London streets and squares, hence the name, but is also popular in New York, Philadelphia, Melbourne and Sydney. The tree bears the name of London because of its popular use during the Industrial Revolution. Its regular loss of bark kept the trunk clean and the tree aesthetically pleasing.

The tree grows to 20–30 m with a trunk up to 3m or more in circumference and may live a century or more. The bark is pale grey-green, smooth and exfoliating. The leaves are thick and stiff textured, maple-like, the blade up to 24 cm long and mostly 5-lobed. Flowers are borne in one to three dense spherical inflorescences on a pendulous stem with the male and female flowers on separate stems. The fruit is a dense round dry cluster of achenes with numerous stiff hairs which aid in wind dispersal.

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The London Plane

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The London Plane is very tolerant of atmospheric pollution and is therefore a popular urban roadside tree. It is commonly used because of its resilience to warm weather, its benefits as a shade tree, resistance to breakage and tolerance of urban pollution where its peeling bark is a useful way of ridding the tree of soot and dust deposits.



Leaves and fruit of the London Plane tree

It is often pruned using a technique called pollarding with the ends of each branch cut back to create a smaller thicker crown thus making a distinctive shape that is sought after in plazas, squares and main streets.

Unfortunately people who live and work in close proximity to these trees can suffer from allergic reactions to the pollen and hairs from the leaves and seed capsules.

Photographs by author



Exfoliating bark of the London Plane tree

MIDDLE PARK ON THE DARK SIDE

by MEYER EIDELSON

'Throw up your hands or I'll blow your brains out'

In 1917, Robert Bennett and Angas Murray were charged with having robbed the ES&A Bank at 104 Canterbury Road, on 18 September just south of today's Middle Park Hotel. Armed with a Winchester rifle they tied up the teller, David Brooke, and robbed the bank of £541 saying: *"Throw up your hands or I'll blow your brains out"*.

Witnesses Mary Edwards, Evelyn Dudfield and Catherine Scott of Middle Park, all identified seeing the men in a jinker (a two wheeled cart) in the back lane. Murray and Bennet were sentenced to 15 years gaol.

Angus Murray however was a well known associate of Squizzy Taylor who broke Angus out of Pentridge Gaol in 1923. On 8 October, escapee Murray was charged with the murder of bank-manager Thomas Berriman at Glenferrie railway station after 12 police cars raided Taylor's hideout at 443 Barkly Street, St Kilda. Taylor was charged with abetting the crime but he escaped conviction. Subsequently Taylor tried twice more to break Murray out of gaol but failed. Murray was eventually executed for the bank manager's murder, a crime masterminded by Taylor.

Taylor's first wife was Irene Lorna Kelly of Middle Park. They were married in 1920. At the time of his courtship of Lorna, Taylor's girlfriend was the notorious Dolly Grey, a prostitute from Little Lonsdale Street. Dolly grew suspicious so Taylor hid Lorna in his brother's house at Middle Park but Dolly found her and dragged her off to see Taylor. *"So who is this then?"*

Lorna divorced Taylor in 1924 (after he abandoned her for Ira Pender) but she was a familiar resident of Middle

Park for many years. In 2014, I caught up with Lorna's grandson, Jason Anderson, of Port Melbourne. He told me that only five days before her death, Lorna had told him that his real grandfather was Squizzy Taylor. It was a secret she had hidden well from the family.

MIDDLE PARK BANK ROBBERY

ACCUSED COMMITTED FOR TRIAL.
MELBOURNE.—At the South Melbourne Court on Wednesday, Robert Bennett and Angas Murray were charged with having at Middle Park on 18th September, in company, and being armed with a rifle, robbed Harold David Brooke, teller of the E.S. and A. Bank, of £541/11/, the property of the bank. Mr. Sonenberg appeared for the accused. Detective-Sergeant Coonan stated that when he asked Bennett at Albury how he "got into this scrape," he replied, "I am dead unlucky."

Guest speaker at our February meeting, Madeline Say, Picture Librarian at the State Library of Victoria, with MPHG treasurer, Sonya Cameron



THE CHURCHES OF MIDDLE PARK

A series by Diana Phoenix

Diana continues with the story of Middle Park churches; this time St Anselm's on the corner of Park and Langridge Sss, decommissioned on the 1 October 2000

St Anselm's Church

In 1890 the Diocese of Melbourne purchased a double block on the north-west corner of Langridge Street and Neville Street, the latter named Park Grove at the time. During the next year the Parish of St Anselm was formed by cutting the area from Harold Street to Fraser Street from the Parish of St Silas in Albert Park. The plan of a weatherboard Church of England was submitted to the Public Health Department. This was in accordance with part of the Church Extension Scheme, establishing parishes in Burnley, Moreland and Middle Park. It was intended that this church would be able to cater for 600 people. The induction of the first incumbent Rev. Dr Stacey Chapman had to be postponed because he was laid up with influenza. Upon being licensed to be a minister there on 1 June 1891, he wrote a letter to the Argus newspaper stating that this new parish was 'a fairly eligible strip of sand between Albert Park and St. Kilda', where there was 'no school, no church, no house, no income'. The Editor added a note describing Rev. Dr Chapman's past work, stating that he deserved support in his new and arduous undertaking. The dedication of the Church took place on 8 October 1891, the ceremony being conducted by Right Reverend Field Flowers Goe, the Bishop of Melbourne.

Dr Chapman, an Englishman, built his own house on the corner of Fraser and Longmore Streets, where he apparently held services before the church was finished. The vicarage was erected in 1911 on the same block but facing Park Road: a two storey brick building with a side entrance and fretwork balustrades on verandah and balcony.

During early times the Sunday School flourished. Each year there was a picnic, one in 1905 being held at Murrumbeena, followed by another in Albert Park by the lake when boats were hired for the children. In 1914 the event was held in a paddock in Ashburton, the group travelling by a special train from Middle Park Station.

Following the formation of the AIF, the first volunteer from St Anselm's in 1914 was Charles Copp, teacher, organist and treasurer of the Sunday School. During the same year the parish boundary was changed again, this time enlarged to take in both sides of Wright Street. However, church attendances were dropping as women became involved in Red Cross work which took them elsewhere.

By 1919 plans were submitted to the Health Department for a new brick church, with a kindergarten behind in the existing church, which was to become an urgently needed Parish Hall. A Church troop of Boy Scouts had been formed in 1919 and met weekly in the Vicarage as did other groups such as the Girls' Friendly Society, Ladies' Guild, Mothers' Union, Church of England Boys' Society, Vestry and Tennis Club. The entrance to the Hall and kindergarten would be from Langridge Street. The architects were Sale and Keage. The church on the north-east corner of Langridge and Park streets was opened on 12 July 1922 with an estimated crowd of 500 in attendance. This red brick building has a roof of terracotta shingles, with a finial topped by a Celtic cross above the entrance in Langridge Street.

On 11 February 1923 a second stained-glass window, dedicated to Captain Cedric Howell, MC, DSO, DFC, was unveiled. A former parishioner, Captain Howell was drowned in the Mediterranean near Corfu. His intention was to fly to Australia from England

in a Martinsyde plane. Due to bad weather the plane crashed into the sea, and while trying to rescue his mechanic who could not swim both were drowned. The first window had been installed in the early days as a memorial to Grace Thomas, mother of the first baby baptized at St Anselm's, Wilson Begg Thomas.

Despite a decline in the numbers attending services during the Depression and the second World War they were increasing again during the 1950s, during which time a new altar and sanctuary gates were installed and the Parish boundary extended to Mills Street. However, more women were going to work and therefore unable to assist with parish duties. Greek families were moving into the area and, naturally, showing devotional affiliations elsewhere. Even so, by 1961 preparations began for the building of a new brick hall. The old one was demolished to make way for the Emmeline Murton Hall on the corner of Langridge and Neville Streets. Dedication took place on 30 November 1969, thanks to a bequest from the estate of Mrs. Murton. The architects this time were Blyth and Josephine Johnson.

Television was beginning to keep people away from evening services, while many young couples were moving to outer suburban areas. One hundred years of worship were celebrated in 1991, as shown by a plaque remaining on the wall in Park Road. However, the church was finally closed on 1 October 2000, when the parish was taken over by the Diocese of Melbourne and amalgamated with that of St Silas, 1.5 km away in Albert Park.

This combined Parish became known as the Anglican Parish of St Silas and St Anselm, popularly called the Anglican Parish of the Parks. The St Anselm property was placed in the hands of a developer who converted the brick church into units, demolished the hall and constructed units there, and turned the vicarage into a family home. Many artefacts and the stained glass windows were then incorporated into St. Silas Church.



St. Anselm's Church and vicarage,
Cnr. Park and Langridge sts.
(Date unknown)

Sources:

- Public Records Office, Victoria. VPRS 7882 P1, VPRS 1671.
- Church of England Messenger, 2 October 1891, p 167.
- Argus, Victoria, 2 July 1891.
- Alex Reid, A Fairly Eligible Strip of Sand, 1991.
- Protestant Churches in South Melbourne – File in Heritage Centre, COPP.
- Archives, Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.
- Max Nankervis.



HOME SWEET HOME

Many Middle Park houses are graced with the addition of a name. It was often common to include nostalgic motherland names of towns or cities, such as Granville in Northern Island. If you lived by the sea, why not name your building 'B the C' or The Anchorage? Perhaps Minerva, the goddess of wisdom would be a fitting name, or simply name your house after yourself, as in the case of Trebor (you need to spell this one backwards). What name would you give to your own home?

KNOW YOUR STREET NAMES



James Page, auctioneer, Emerald Hill Councillor 1870-75, Mayor, 1873-74

James Page (-1912), an auctioneer and estate agent, was one of the first residents of Emerald Hill. He married Eliza Mills (probably a sister of Robert Mills) in 1860. Page was one of the first promoters of the South Melbourne Gas Company in 1871, and was the executive secretary of the South Melbourne Permanent Building Society from 1875. Due to concerns about Page's lax accounting led to Matthias Larkin taking over the role in August 1877. Page left for Brisbane in 1878, and soon after it was discovered that five hundred pounds in funds was missing. A year later he was arrested, and charged with embezzlement. He was found not guilty after two trials. After his acquittal he was voted Council Valuer in 1882, but he unsuccessfully contested the position of municipal auditor in 1885.

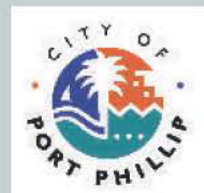
Extract with thanks to Dr Rob Grogan, from his book: *Colonels, Colonials and Councillors: The Origin of Street Names of South Melbourne*, Grogan, R; Cygnet Books, 2007.



Last month's mystery object

This narrow walkway lane runs between Richardson and Erskine Streets, near Nimmo St. It was likely designed to provide access for the 'nightman'.

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



MEETING SCHEDULE:

Committee meeting: 4 May 2015 **General Meeting:** 1 June 2015 **Committee meeting:** 6 July 2015
Notification will be sent to you prior to the meeting listing agenda items and supporting documents