



Glen Eira Historical Society

Memories of growing up during World War II 1939-1945

I was eight years old when World War II broke out on 3 September 1939, living at Gardenvale with my parents, older sister and younger brother. I don't remember hearing Robert Menzies, the Prime Minister at the time, making the grim announcement but I do remember listening to his later speeches and others by John Curtin, Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill. We had a very large console type radio in our kitchen.

Day to day life, as we knew it, started to change. Everyday items soon became scarce and rationing began. Each member of the family was issued with a "ration book" containing coupons for food - butter, tea, sugar, meat, etc. I think clothing rationing started a little later. Petrol was also rationed, you were allowed 5 gallons per ticket and those who were lucky enough to have a car often had "gas producers" or "charcoal burners" installed, usually on the running boards of the car. I think the ration for butter was 1lb. per person per fortnight. The shopkeepers would cut the coupons from our ration book and stick them in their book as they had to account for what they sold.

I was at the Elsternwick State School (now Elsternwick Primary) in the early 40's and part of the boys yard was dug up to install trenches. We were given air-raid drills.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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Above: Ration books. Image courtesy of National Library of Australia.



Above: Dodge car at Appin with charcoal-burner fitted to rear. Ca. 1943. Image courtesy of Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society, NSW.
<http://server2.webfrogstudios.com.au/welcome-to-our-website.html>

***We acknowledge that the Boon Wurrung People of the Kulin Nation
are the traditional custodians of the area covered by the City of Glen Eira***



**Proudly supported by
Glen Eira City Council Community Grants and
Bendigo Bank Murrumbidgee**



Memories of growing up during WWII

We had to have a little bag hung around our neck with a piece of cotton wool and a rubber in it. We were taken out into the street and practised lying in the gutters with the cotton wool in our ears and the rubber between our teeth (in case a bomb fell nearby). I don't think any of us were too worried about this and probably treated it as a bit of fun not realising how serious it could become.

My parents had to fill in forms to say what would happen to us children if there was ever a need for evacuation. We had relatives on a farm in Garfield and, in an emergency, my brother and I were to go there. Gippsland was obviously considered far enough away from Melbourne to be safe. Presumably my older sister, who was at high school at the time, had to stay home. A few years later when I went to Hampton High School I found trenches had also been dug there. We were not supposed to play in them but I know we did, zig-zag style was great for hiding around corners. I do remember they used to fill with water half of the time.

My father dug an air-raid shelter in our back yard. He had a lot of trouble as we had very sandy soil and the sides kept sliding in. He, however, boarded up the sides and eventually finished it, put on a tin roof and covered that with the soil he had dug out. Another good place to hide and play in.

We lived not far from an army drill hall and we would often hear the air-raid sirens in practice. My mother also had to make heavy dark curtains to hang over our windows for the "black-out" nights. We could also see the searchlights as they

practised from another depot near Elwood beach.

My father was an air-raid warden for a while before he was "called up". He went to meetings for instructions, would patrol the streets to make sure no lights could be seen through windows. He carried a gas mask and a torch and learned how to put out fires and check on people if the need ever arose. First aid classes were held around the district.

My father was a carpenter and joiner by trade and, being too old to enlist, he was drafted in to the Allied Works Department that later became the Civil Construction Corps. He was sent by train to Adelaide, then on open-back trucks for the trip to the Northern Territory along the, as then unsealed, Stuart Highway.



Above: Alice Springs to Adelaide River, Central Australia. 1944-06-18. Navy, Army Air Force Allied Works Council and Civil Construction Corps Passengers of the Convoy of the 2/163rd General Transport Company lining up for their Mess Parade at Cabbage Gum Bore. Image courtesy of Australian War Memorial.

He was stationed at Adelaide River, living and working in the military camps erecting and maintaining their buildings. He spent some time in Darwin and was in the

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Northern Territory when the first air-raids occurred. Adelaide River was bombed during 1943. While Dad was away my mother was paid the princely sum of £3 per week to feed and clothe the family.

I remember receiving letters from Dad. They all had “passed by the censor” stamped on the envelope and there were often bits cut out where he must have mentioned place names etc. It must have been hard for my parents, writing to each other, knowing their letters would be read by others.

Many years after the war, I think about 1995/6, the Government decided to award civil service medals to those who had served “at home”. My father had already passed away by this time, but my brother applied for his medal and it is now in his family’s keeping and I have a photograph of it.

In 1998, Lindsay and I travelled by caravan through the Northern Territory and found the remnants of the campsites where my father had been stationed. The foundations of many of the buildings were visible, also many bunkers that were dug into the hill side to keep the ammunition, as it was also an armament depot.

Runway strips were also visible in many places along the way. There is a memorial board at the site listing this area as “Snake Creek”, an historic site, honouring the work of the Allied Work Force.

We also visited the nearby War Cemetery where hundreds of our young servicemen and women are buried, together with 63 civilians who were killed during the air raids on Darwin. It is a beautiful well-kept place but just so heart-breaking to read

the ages on the memorials, so many just teenagers, such a wicked waste of life.


AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL
REL/11262

Above: Oxidised cap badge of the Civil Constructional Corps. Round badge has a cogged edge and 'CCC' in the centre. Around the edge is 'CIVIL CONSTRUCTIONAL CORPS'. The badge is fitted with a pair of mounting loops soldered to the rear. Image courtesy of the Australian War Memorial.

My Mother joined the VAD's (Voluntary Aid Division). These volunteers were ladies who went to different convalescent hospitals to help out with meals, writing letters, rolling bandages, taking patients for walks etc. She wore a bone coloured uniform and a veil with a red cross on it. I think she went once a week.

Towards the end of the war and for a while after, my older sister was a volunteer one night a week at the “Canteen”. A type of meeting place and coffee shop for the men in uniform. It was in the Old Tin Shed in Elizabeth Street, beside the GPO.

At school we were encouraged to knit scarves and socks for the soldiers. I vividly remember one morning I was summoned

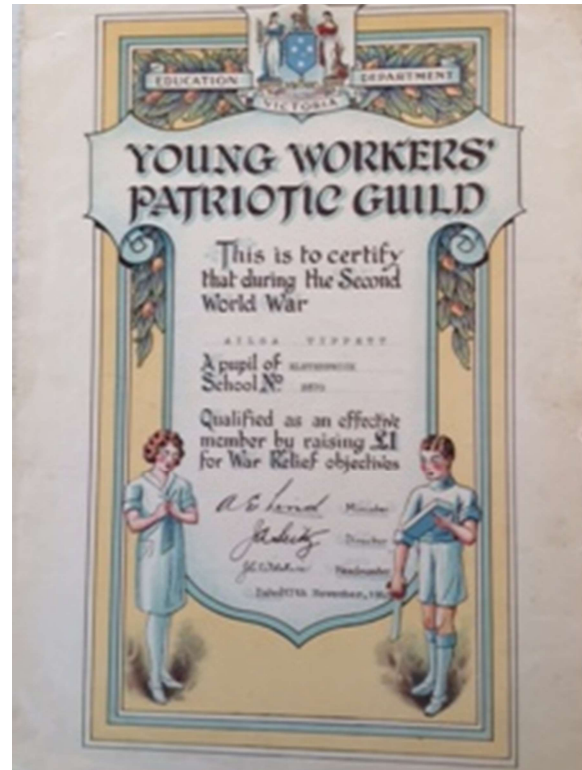
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to the head master's office. He asked me if I knew a soldier (I can't remember the name). Of course I said no – he then handed me a letter addressed to me, care of the school. (Did he think I was having an affair at 10 years of age?) It turned out to be a "thank you" letter from the soldier who had received the scarf I had knitted and it had been sent with my name and school on it. I, then, became the heroine and the letter was read out to the entire school. I don't know what happened to that letter but I am sorry it was never kept.

As some of our teachers were away on active service, there was often a change of staff during the year as retired teachers were brought back to help out. I have a certificate from the Elsternwick State School (as it was then) for raising £1 in 1942 for the "Young Workers' Patriotic Guild". To raise this money we held guessing competitions such as having to guess the number of jellybeans in a jar, the prize being the contents of the jar. On another occasion, my brother and I took a large pumpkin around the neighbourhood in a billy cart, and you had to guess the weight. Again the prize was the pumpkin. I also remember going to church fetes and a bazaar held by the Red Cross in the Gardenvale Masonic Hall to raise funds.

We lived in a "War Savings Street". A man called at the house each week to get 6d. from our family. I think if you saved up to 16/- you could cash it in for £1 sometime after the war ended. This might have been something like the war savings bonds. Years later that same man offered me my first job as a junior typist at *Williams the Shoeman* Head Office, where he was the Secretary.

When I was at high school I was able to get a job at Christmas time (as all young people did in those days).



Above: Certificate from Elsternwick State School for Ailsa Tippet, as recognition for raising funds for the Young Workers' Patriotic Guild. Image courtesy of Ailsa Hunt.

I first had to register with the "Manpower" office that was in St. Kilda. I think it was to keep track of people, and I was issued with a certificate to say I could work. I worked for two Christmases in the toy department of *Reids* department store in Prahran.

Another thing I remember is the music of those days – songs like *White Cliffs of Dover*, *Wish Me Luck*, *Lilli Marlene*, *We'll Meet Again*, *Till the Lights of London Shine Again*, *Pack up Your Troubles* etc., and after the Americans entered the war –

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The Andrew Sisters, and The Glen Miller Band became very popular.

I remember sometimes going to the pictures and there was always a “newsreel” before the main show. These would often show the London bombings and air raids. It was one of the ways we could really see what was going on. There were often large black headlines in our daily papers of significant events, and I also remember the *Bluey and Curley* comic strips, with their funny jokes and faces, trying to lift the spirits of everyone.

My Grandmother (Dad’s mother) died in August 1945 and as the War was all but over, Dad was given compassionate leave and came home for the funeral. The powers that be decided not to send him back to the Territory but to Bonegilla to help build accommodation for migrants. He was finally discharged and came home to a very welcoming family. We were one of the lucky families – at least our dad was in Australia and we didn’t have the worry of not knowing what was going on overseas. I can only imagine what that time must have been like for the families



Above: Caulfield Park trenches. The City Engineer reported “the trenches remained unused except for practice...” GEHS collection.

of men serving outside Australia. Communication was very slow. It was often weeks before we realised the true extent of what was going on “over there”.

September 1945 - The war was over. I was at Business College in the City and remember seeing crowds celebrating in the streets, and later on many victory parades to welcome the troops home. It took many years before things really got back to “normal”. Food was still rationed and it was hard to get household items such as towels, sheets etc. – I think tea rationing was the last to go, about 1950.

Ailsa Hunt
Member Volunteer, Glen Eira Historical Society

Wings over Glen Huntly

On Thursday, 25 September 1919, the *Caulfield News* reported that “a site for the establishment of an aerodrome in Carnegie had been acquired by a well-known English firm of aeroplane builders.” The site was at the back of the Recreation Reserve near Koornang Road on what is now known as Lord Reserve. Already work had started on the levelling of the ground to make a runway landing strip. (*Caulfield News* Vol. 1 No. 19 25/11/1919)

In a short time a hangar that resembled a very large timbered garage was constructed to keep the plane securely locked when not in use and away from the elements. In due course, approval was granted by the Council for a street directional sign indicating the way to the aerodrome.

Wings over Glen Huntly

On Sunday 19 October, in the mid-afternoon, the new aerodrome between Carnegie and Glen Huntly was put to practical use for the first time. Captain H. J. Larkin and his mechanics put together the Sopwith "Dove" aeroplane. By then there was quite a large crowd of spectators including people from the city who had driven out to Glen Huntly to view this flying demonstration.

At 4PM Captain Larkin climbed into the cockpit. The propeller was swung and the engine roared into life. Captain Larkin taxied off and took to the air. He then proceeded to put on a display of flying that included steep climbing, nose diving, corkscrews and the loop the loop among other stunts that enthralled the crowd. There was only one problem. As Captain Larkin came in to land the crowd in its excitement ran towards the landing field. This caused him to have to land on uneven ground and damaging the wheel struts. However, when the crowd dispersed, most had been "bitten by the flying bug". (*Caulfield News* Vol. 1 No. 23) *Note, the Caulfield News described the plane erroneously as a Sopworth Dove; no doubt because Larkin had registered the company as the Sopworth Aeronautical Company [Neville Daynes].*

The following week, on Sunday 26 October 1919, there was the opportunity for more than just spectating. The opportunity for joy rides was advertised. These would begin at 3PM for those who could afford for what was then a variety of joy rides on offer. For 2 guineas it was possible to get a flight of 5 minutes. A 10 minute flight cost 4 guineas and 5 guineas gained 15 minutes of flying. A further 5 shillings

gained the experience of a dive. For ten shillings those with strong nerves could experience the loop the loop. In all there were 20 flights but no local Melburnian was prepared to try either the dive or the loop the loop. (*Caulfield News* Vol.1 No.24)



Above: Enthusiastic crowds at Glen Huntly Aerodrome, 1920-1921. GEHS collection.

These Sunday flights were to become a regular fixture. Before very long the local ministers observed that the Sunday school attendances were beginning to decline. A plane in the sky and the excitement of a plane engine throttling on take-off or approaching landing was much more exciting than stories about angels and God's possible retribution for a missed Sunday school class. Complaints from the local ministers saw the *Sopworth Aviation Company* writing to the Council advising that it was prepared to compromise and commence flying on Sundays a half hour later at 3.30PM. This was certainly not good enough for the church leaders but mollified a majority of councillors. (*Elsternwick Times* Vol. 1 No.1 23/12/1919)

There were still complaints from the church leaders that these Sunday aeroplane flights were distracting children from attending Sunday school. The *Larkin*

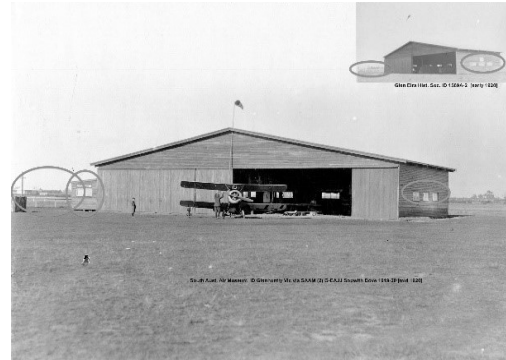
Wings over Glen Huntly

Sopworth Company further compromised by delaying their flight program to 3.45pm. The divines insisted on a complete banning of these Sunday flights. However, a majority of councillors remained firm. (*Caulfield News* Vol. 1 No. 28 22/01/1920)

On Thursday 19 February 1920, the *Caulfield News* advised that the Caulfield District Brass Band had arranged for performances on four successive Sunday afternoons at 3PM at the Aerodrome, beginning on 22 February. The proceeds would be in aid of the *Womens Hospital*. One wonders whether this was an initiative of the *Sopworth Aviation Company* to reduce any community adverse reaction inflamed by pulpit condemnation. (*Caulfield News* Vol.1 No.32)

It would seem that the Company funded its activities from the money made from the Sunday joy rides and wealthy people who could afford to hire the plane to fly them to nearby country towns to transact business. The local racecourse was usually suitable for a landing strip of sufficient length for both landing and taking off at such places.

One person with a dishonest bent took advantage of the interest shown by local residents in the flying activities. He persuaded four individual housewives to loan their kettles so the company could speedily repair weaknesses in the wings and fuselage and reproof the material for an important flight to Tasmania. An enquiry established that there had been no request from the *Sopworth Aviation Company*; and, needless to say the kettles were never seen again.



Above: Sopwith Dove aircraft and hangar, circa 1920s. GEHS collection. Note, the building in the background may be the Larkin hangar, the first to be sited at the new Essendon Aerodrome, however GEHS cannot confirm.

More serious for the company there was a burglary when offenders broke into the hangar, and used a brace and bit to access the employee quarters and from which they stole gratuity bonds clothing as well as flying apparel from Captain Ray King (*Caulfield News* Vol.3 No.19 6/10/1921)

On Thursday 17 November 1921 the *Caulfield News* reported that under new Civil Aviation regulations, the Glen Huntly Aerodrome was considered too small for flying purposes. So the *Larkin Sopworth Company* and buildings were transferred to the new, larger, civil aviation aerodrome at Essendon that week. A Mr. Walter Mitchell was the last person to enjoy a flight from the Glenhuntly Aerodrome when he was flown to the Mornington Racecourse. (*Caulfield News* Vol.3 No.25 17/11/1921)

Captain Larkin was not completely out of pocket. The Department of Civil Aviation bought from him his hangar building which he then leased back from it. In 1922, he was successful in obtaining a post office

Wings over Glen Huntly

contract to fly mail between Melbourne and Adelaide.

Presumably Sunday school attendances picked up. The Street Directional sign was



Above: Sopwith Dove aircraft, circa 1920s. GEHS collection.

to remain for many years. At a meeting of the Glen Huntly Progress Association on 6 March 1924 it was resolved to ask the Caulfield Council to acquire the aerodrome site for a public park from it (*Caulfield News* Vol.5 No. 40 13/03/1924), Those in the Glen Huntly and nearby south eastern suburbs would have to wait until the Moorabbin Airport Aerodrome was in operation to again hear the roar of an aero engine.

Neville Daynes
Member Volunteer, Glen Eira Historical Society

Clarification re: airfield photos

The precise location of the photos included in the article above is unclear. GEHS believe they are a mixture of both Glen Huntly and Essendon Aerodromes. However, the plane is a Sopwith Dove and the hangar may well be the hangar Captain Larkin sold to Essendon Aerodrome. If anyone has photographs of the Glen Huntly airfield or further information about these photographs, please contact GEHS.

Caulfield District Band

The Caulfield District Band was unique as it was the band of choice for the Caulfield Racecourse as well as the local council. The VATC paid the band £15 for 15 meetings a year.

The letterhead is elaborate. Apart from the photograph, it lists all the patrons and office bearers at the time. It also shows how the band gained engagements with various parties by providing a tender for services.

Extract from Victorian Collections, Museum Victoria, Historical Information



Left: 11 August 1928 - Letter to V.A.T.C. re programme for races. Image courtesy of Victorian Bands' League.

Below is the content of a letter from the Caulfield District Band to Ron Bowden dated 30 Jan 1928, regarding a tender for eight performances.

Highett Rd
Moorabbin
30/1/28

Mr R Bowden

Dear Sir,

Your tender for the supply of a Band of eight performers to accompany Picknickers(sic) on Thursday Fe 23 1928 was considered at the Committee meeting held Saturday.

The Committee decided to accept your tender £10.0.0. Your performers will provide their meals. We will provide the tickets.

I am directed to accept your tender and is our usual custom to ask for a deposit of two pounds as a guarantee of your good faith. Deposit will be returned on completion of engagement. I will send you the tickets later on.

I remain
Yours etc.
C C A George

Remembering Pierre Demathieu

Pierre Alexis Guy Demathieu, Pharmacist, 84, died from COVID-19 in a nursing home in Saint Etienne, France. There was 1355 deaths in France on 2 April 2020 from COVID-19. There are over 30,000 in France and over 250 in Australia today, as of August 2020.

He came to Australia 13 times and felt no language barrier with his outgoing persona. A personality that made him close to the community, his family, friends, his sick patients, the homeless and high society.

He was proud of his country working class heritage built in Doranges, Auvergne and four generations of civilian Demathieus answering the call to go to war for France (Algerian War, World War I, World War II and Franco Prussian War).

Thierry Demathieu
Member, Glen Eira Historical Society
Son of Pierre Demathieu, living the dream in an 1890 Bayview Victorian Terrace on Hawthorn Road, Caulfield North



Above: Doranges, Auvergne. A tribute photo taken from the house built by his grandfather that he never met, before his call to serve in World War I. A view over the roofs towards the 12th century church steeple.

From the President

In these difficult COVID-19 times we hope you enjoy another interesting newsletter. Working from home has been challenging at times but we have still been able to produce the newsletter (thanks to Adriana who manages to work full-time and home-school, and to Joy for sourcing the content), attend VCAT hearings and Committee meetings via Zoom, undertake house and property research, and develop a new website and new logo. In saying this, we do however miss working together in our rooms, being able to access our Collection and talking and sharing local history with our volunteers and visitors.

We hope to launch our new website and logo at our AGM to be held via Zoom on Wednesday, 7 October at 7.30PM. Until then, take care and stay well.

Barbara Hoad
President, Glen Eira Historical Society

P.S. For all you researchers, did you know you can use Ancestry Library edition for free, online through your local library membership. If you're not a member already you can join online:

<https://library.gleneira.vic.gov.au/about-us/membership>

In fact you can join most libraries online including the State Library of Victoria.



Above: GEHS President Barbara Hoad and Vice-President, Anne Kilpatrick at the GEHS planning day prior to COVID-19 restrictions, February 2020.

Heritage Update

Glen Eira Historical Society is currently an Objector in 3 proposals:

1. 10-16 Selwyn Street, Elsternwick (old ABC Administration site) - awaiting decision by VCAT (Senior Member Philip Martin and Member Kerrie Birtwistle). The 18 day hearing ended 24 July 2020. The last 8 days were conducted by Zoom video conference. Our role is complete in providing both an opening and closing submission plus the opportunity to witness the proceedings including the expert evidence where we could ask questions.

So many important and complex issues have been jostling for supremacy with this case. From differing visions of the Jewish Cultural and Arts Precinct to the role of retail/need for residential development, to the impact of a "Strategic Site" on neighbouring residents, to the respect for Heritage precincts and individual Heritage sites such as Glenmore mansion and grounds plus the Former Elsternwick Fire Station, trucks on residential streets, traffic, parking, noise and amenity. The impact of two residential towers and a full scale supermarket would certainly impose on this whole heritage area. The decision is expected any time from early August.

2. 430-434 Neerim Road, Murrumbeena (once Woodland's supermarket) - listed for VCAT Hearing on 23 November 2020 for 5 days online.

The Compulsory Conference which we attended as one of many objectors has not resulted in agreement between the parties. Again a range of issues, with heritage, height and proposed use as student accommodation at the forefront.

3. 7 Selwyn Street, Elsternwick (demolition and rebuild of the Kadimah Jewish

Cultural Centre and National Library) - Glen Eira Council is to consider this Planning Application at 1 September 2020 meeting. This proposal includes the mooted relocation of the Jewish Museum from St Kilda to Elsternwick. You may have seen some recent publicity in the media about that.

The whole available site would be demolished and replaced with a podium and tower of almost 43 metres at its highest point. Approaching the height of the proposed Woolworths development across the street, heritage significance issues regarding the existing building and the prized Duldig sculpture and windows on the exterior Selwyn Street frontage, our Heritage Precinct H072 (Elsternwick and Environs) etc., amenity of neighbours, overshadowing 17 Gordon Street, parking, traffic and of course the future shape of the proposed Jewish Arts Quarter/Jewish Cultural and Arts Precinct - all relevant issues.

Concurrently, at the 11 August 2020 Council meeting our Council voted unanimously in favour of formally asking the Minister for Planning to start the protracted process for the Post-War and Hidden Gems Heritage Amendment and Glen Eira Thematic Environmental History Refresh to become part of the Glen Eira Planning Scheme.

- Net number of additional individual heritage sites included: 37
- Net number of additional heritage precincts included: 4

Unfortunately, 7 potential heritage buildings including the Kadimah (see above) have been excluded for various reasons stated in the report.

Heritage Update

If you are interested in overall a very enjoyable, in depth read about Glen Eira's history and heritage, here's the link to the report in the Council's Agenda:
Item 8.4: scroll down to pdf for Agenda Part 2.

<https://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/about-council/meetings-and-agendas/council-agendas-and-minutes/ordinary-meeting-council-tuesday-11-august-2020>
(It's a large file so will take a while to download).

We will update you as these progress. Please do consider how straightforward it is to lodge an objection yourself with Council if you are concerned about a particular development. The number of objections received can be the difference between a Council Officer making a decision or the full Council considering and voting on the decision.

See the Glen Eira Council website below. Objections can be lodged any time prior to Council or its officers making a decision (i.e. you can lodge even after the end of the advertising of the application). Your reasons can be brief or more fulsome.

<https://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/services/planning-and-building/planning/advertised-plans-and-planning-register>

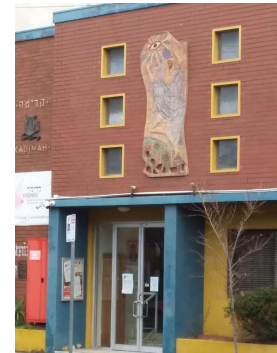
Anne Kilpatrick
Vice President, Glen Eira Historical Society



Above: ABC Elsternwick, 10-16 Selwyn Street, Elsternwick (old ABC Administration site), awaiting decision by VCAT regarding development proposal.



Left: Jewish Holocaust Centre, 13-15 Selwyn St, Elsternwick. Image courtesy GEHS member.



Above: Exterior of the Kadimah Centre, 7 Selwyn Street, Elsternwick, showcasing the Duldig Sculpture by artist Karl Duldig. August 2020. Image courtesy GEHS member.

September 2020 Newsletter Editorial Team:
Joy Mawbey and Adriana Konidaris

Glen Eira Historical Society Inc. A00741700U
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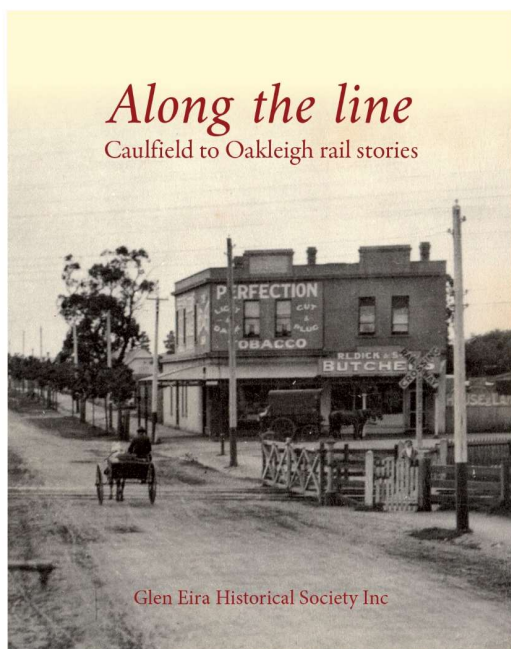
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NEW RELEASE



Along the line Caulfield to Oakleigh rail stories

Glen Eira Historical Society Inc

During 2017 the stations of Carnegie, Murrumbeena and Hughesdale and their familiar landscapes were demolished to make way for a new elevated railway. This book by Glen Eira Historical Society covers the history of these stations and the bookend stations of Caulfield and Oakleigh along with the communities they served. It tells the story of the Springvale cemetery train and includes some train trivia.

Over 40 personal stories and memories are captured here and bring this local history to life:

'Most of the goods trains operated at night and on cold foggy mornings the driver and fireman would be peering into the distance trying to locate signals illuminated with kerosene burners. There were smoking and non-smoking carriages; at night when the driver looked back he could see the smoke plumes wafting out of every second carriage'.



Along the Line by Glen Eira Historical Society Inc

ISBN: 978-0-6485406-0-1

RRP: \$30.00

Trim: 195mm x 250mm

Weight of book: 653 grams

Category: Local History

Quantity ordered: _____

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