



**CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH IN CAULFIELD/GLEN EIRA
1921 - 2021**



Above: Caulfield Baby Health Centre, maternal health nurse, c.1961. (Image courtesy of City of Glen Eira)

CAULFIELD BABY HEALTH CENTRE - THE BEGINNINGS

As World War I continued in its carnage the Australian states began to think about how a better society could be constructed for their citizens. One area of common concern was the alarming infant mortality. For example, it was estimated that prior to 1917, 8% of infants died within a year of their birth in Australia. Of those who recovered from illness a number suffered from ongoing disabilities. The death rate was even higher in the poorer suburbs.

Some progress had been made overseas and to a lesser extent in NSW. In Victoria, infant welfare centres were virtually non-existent and the Government continued to procrastinate. However by early 1919 there were two competing Baby Health Centre systems in Victoria: The Victorian Baby Health Centre Association which had established its first centre in Richmond in 1917 (gec.org.au/history/historygallery) and the longer established New Zealand Truby King (Plunket) health centre system.

Both organisations in 1919 made approaches to the Caulfield Council for support in setting up a baby health centre in the municipality and these requests were referred to the Health Committee (*Caulfield News Vol 1, No. 1, 22 May 1919*). After some significant delays the Council wrote to each organisation asking them to explain their system in writing (*Caulfield News, Vol 5, No. 25, Thursday 2 December 1920*). Probably of significance was that Dr Reid, the Chief Medical Officer favoured the Truby King (Plunket) system although fewer of these had been established in Victoria (*Caulfield News Vol 2, No. 28, Thursday 2 December 1920*). One suspects this had caused a stalemate in proceedings.

CAULFIELD COUNCIL BABY HEALTH CENTRES 1921-1924

On Thursday, 10 February 1921, the *Caulfield News* reported: "The Caulfield Council has taken 2 years to make up its mind to establish a Baby Health Centre in the municipality. The assistance of two organisations undertaking similar activities has been a stumbling block on the adoption of a system in Caulfield. The Mayor (Cr. Packer) and Town Clerk has met with the managers of baby health centres in which they had 25 centres compared with one controlled by the Truby King Committee. The Council has resolved to contribute £105 annually towards the cost. The balance is coming from the Government and the Felton Bequest. The centre will be in the charge of a qualified nurse and have its headquarters at the Town Hall with depots at other centres." (*Caulfield News Vol. No. 37 Thursday 10 February 1921*)

One senses that Cr. Packer may have had more drive than a couple of mayoral predecessors. In this he was backed by his Town Clerk. Of similar disposition seems to have been his wife Mrs J. T. Packer for, on Wednesday 2 March 1921, *The Argus* reported that "the Mayoress of Caulfield, (Mrs J. T. Packer) had arranged for the inaugural meeting of the Caulfield Baby Health Centre to be held at the Caulfield Town Hall on Tuesday, 9 March 1921 at 3 o'clock. Dr. Constance Ellis will speak and office bearers and a committee would be elected". (*The Argus 2 March 1921*)

This was virtually echoed a day later by the *Caulfield News*, "The Lady Mayoress to call a meeting of ladies for Tuesday afternoon next (March 8) at 3pm in the Caulfield Town Hall to inaugurate the local Baby Health Centre. A room at the Town Hall will be provided and be open 2 days a week." (*Caulfield News Vol.2 No.40 Thursday 3 March 1921*)

The *Caulfield News* loyally reported the meeting as follows: "The inaugural meeting was held in the courthouse at the Town Hall on Thursday 8 March. Plans for a ladies committee to appoint and control the sister after appointment. The Mayoress to chair the Committee which is to appoint ladies to weigh the babies and cut out patterns." (*Caulfield News Vol 2 No.41 Thursday 10 March 1921*)

On 24 March 1921, the *Caulfield News* confidently announced that "the Ladies Committee had appointed Sister Wilson as the local nurse in charge of the Caulfield Baby Health Centre. A special room at the Town hall has been renovated and fitted out. The sister will be in attendance every Tuesday and Friday morning and make home visits where necessary". (*Caulfield News Vol. 2 No. 43 Thursday 24 March 1921*)

It seems that the baby health centre was to operate in either a converted cloak room or store room at the Town Hall. One wonders also how well Sister Wilson accepted lay people telling her how to operate the clinic or how well she accepted the idea of enthusiastic ladies taking over the bathing of the infants.

The *Caulfield News* continued to be on the ball with its reporting of baby health centre events with such items as "The Baby Health Centre is to be officially opened early next month. Sub-centres at Carnegie and Elsternwick are planned for later dates" (*Caulfield News Vol. 2 No. 46 Thursday 14 April 1921*) and "The Public Health Department has notified the approval of the Minister for Health for a Baby Health Centre at Caulfield Town Hall." (*Caulfield News Vol.2 No.51 Thursday 19 May 1921*)

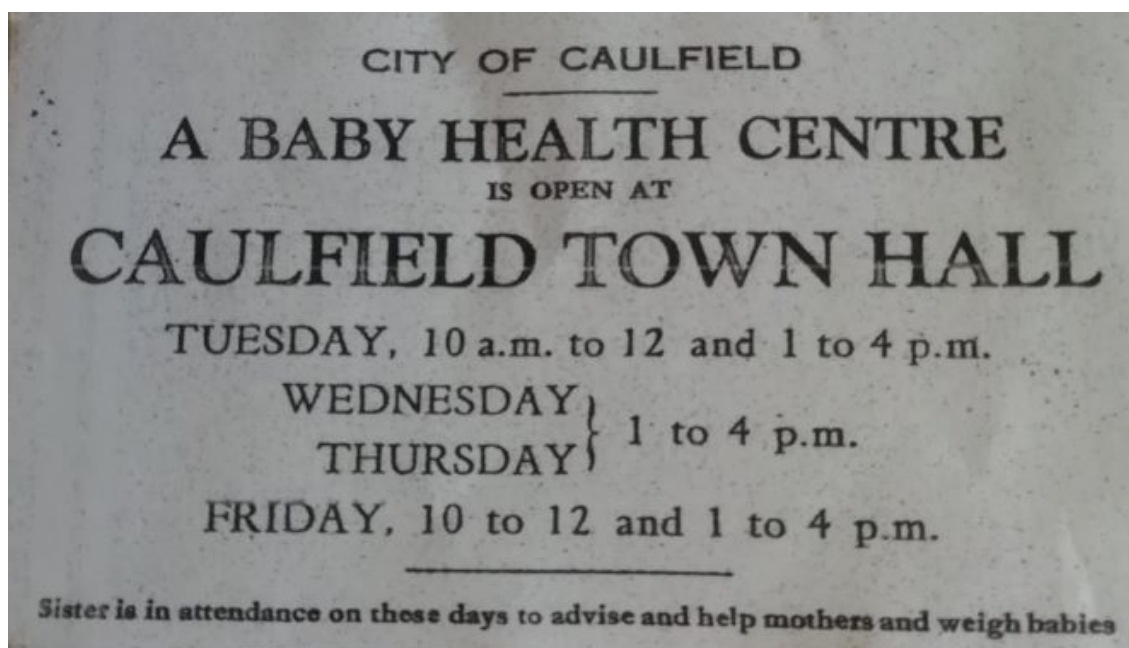
If there were any doubts about the Council's long term commitment to baby

health centres in the municipality it was soon put to rest with the decision to allot £105 for the work of the Infant Welfare Centre for the year ending 30 June 1922 (*Caulfield News Vol 3 No.18 Thursday 6 October 1921*). By this time it was clear that the demand for infant welfare services in the municipality was putting a huge pressure on Sister Wilson. A suggestion that a centre be established at Glenhuntly was referred to the Health Committee of Council (*Caulfield News Vol. 3 No.20 Thursday 20 October 1921*).

However, Glenhuntly was not the favoured suburb. Instead, it was decided that the sub-centre of the Caulfield Baby Health Centre would be established in Carnegie in early 1922 at the Carnegie Memorial Hall, Rosstown Road. Initially it was to open on one day a week (*Caulfield News Vol. 3 No.35 Thursday 2 February 1922*). However, why Carnegie and not Glenhuntly? Was this decision due to the Packer influence? After all Cr. Packer as the Mayor had played a key role in the decision to finally set up a baby health centre in Caulfield. His wife, as Mayoress had convened the Ladies Committee that she then subsequently chaired. Carnegie was in Cr. Packer's South Ward. Another factor may have been the influence of the Carnegie Progress Association key office holders behind the scenes. This was the most active of the municipal progress associations in the municipality. The issue needs an indefatigable local researcher to solve.

By mid-July, the Carnegie Baby Health Centre was fully operational in the local Memorial Hall and open on Mondays and Thursdays between 1pm and 4pm (*Caulfield News Vol.4 No.7 Thursday 22 July 1922*). The operations at the Carnegie Baby Health Centre clearly interested certain councillors who wanted Council to be seen as providing ongoing support apart from just the annual funding. At its August meeting Cr Wharington suggested that Council should purchase a bicycle to assist the baby health centre sister (probably Sister Warburton) at Carnegie when she had to make home visits into the outskirts. This was referred to the consideration of the Baby Health Centre Committee. Presumably, the Committee approved the expenditure (*Caulfield News Vol. 4 No.13 Thursday 31 August 1922*).

This leads one local historian into visions of the nursing sister pedalling determinedly up Neerim Road to a home visit near Murrumbeena Road in full nursing garb with important paraphernalia in a handlebar basket. Remember these were bike models without gears and only a footbrake. What is more, this was a Neerim Road probably not sealed. Even experienced truck drivers and carters of the time had complained about Council's inaction. Ah, those early baby health centre sisters were of a tough, physically fit, resilient breed – and dedicated to the mothers and infants who so clearly needed their care and reassurance.



Above: City of Caulfield Infant Welfare Record Book cover, dated 1940. (GEHS collection)

Brown theme **BABY'S WEIGHT** *clothes 10/6*

Date	Weight	Date	Weight	Date	Weight
14.3.40	7-1	25.5.40	11-14	13.8.40	16-
19.3.40	7-13½	5.6.40	13-0	20.8.40	16.6
Length = 21		11.6.40	13-0	25.8.40	16.12
21.5.40	7-11	18.6.40	13-4½	3.9.40	16.15
25.5.40	7-6	20.6.40	13-4½	11.9.40	17.4½
23.4.40	9-2	25.6.40	13.12	24.9.40	17.11
Length 22		2.7.40	14-4½	Length 27½	
30.4.40	9-10	9.7.40	14-6	1.10.49	17.13
7.5.40	10-3	23.7.40	15-6	9.10.49	17.14
16.5.40	11-1	30.7.40	15-9	15.10.40	18.2
21.5.40	11-5¾	Length 25		22.10.40	18.2
Length 21		6.8.40	15-15	Length 27½	

Above: City of Caulfield Infant Welfare Record Book entry, dated 1940. (GEHS collection)



Above: Hansen's junket tablets. Fed to babies and children, manufactured in Adelaide and contained lactose, arrowroot, calcium lactate, whey, natural colours and flavouring. (GEHS Collection)



Above: Baby spoons and pushers. A food pusher is a utensil for a baby or toddler who is learning to feed themselves. With the pusher, the child can push food onto the spoon. (GEHS collection)



Above left: ABC baby's plate.

(GEHS collection)

(All infant welfare items featured above, were kindly donated to GEHS by Jill Miller).



Above right: Baby feeder/bib. Made from fine linen, hemmed by hand in 'spoke' stitch. Probably used to protect the baby's best clothes when 'in company'. (GEHS collection)

At the end of June, the following year, the Council received a detailed report on the operations of both baby health centres. It made very pleasing reading. The Caulfield Centre was now open 4 days a week and that at Carnegie 3 days a week. Caulfield reported a maximum daily attendance of 68 mothers with the average being 50. Carnegie's maximum daily attendance was 31 with an average figure of 20.

Since opening, Caulfield had treated 8,678 babies and 320 expectant mothers. For Carnegie the figures were respectively 1,674 and 20. Now the average monthly attendance for Caulfield was 420 and that for Carnegie 206. Of most importance no baby in attendance had subsequently died. The net cost of the operation for Council had been £230 per annum and the Government had contributed £125 to each centre (*Caulfield News Vol.5 No. 5 Thursday 28 June 1923*).

Just at this time for rightful congratulation and celebration, there was a minor disaster. Sister Wilson, the inaugural Caulfield Baby Health Centre sister, gave notice. She had been attracted to a more highly paid position. Shutting the stable door after the horse had bolted, Council at its next meeting agreed to raise the sister's salary by £40 a year (*Caulfield News Vol.5 No.6 Thursday 5 July 1923*). Council's inducement appears to have had the desired effect and Sister Wilson remained at Caulfield.

The council did not stop there. It was now time to do away with the temporary accommodation used at both the Caulfield and the Carnegie centres. Council staff were commissioned to design two purpose built stand-alone facilities. That for Caulfield would be constructed next to the caretaker's cottage adjoining the Town Hall, on the north side of Hawthorn Road. The new Carnegie Baby Health centre was to be constructed in Truganini Road near the children's playground. The Caulfield Council was now in for the long haul when it came to protecting the health of babies and their mothers in the municipality (*Caulfield News Vol.5 No.25 Thursday 15 November 1923*).

Neville Daynes

Member Volunteer, Glen Eira Historical Society

THE CAULFIELD CUSTOM MADE BABY HEALTH CENTRE BUILDINGS

In the middle of 1923, Council commissioned staff to design two purpose-built, stand alone facilities. The centre for Caulfield would be constructed next to the caretaker's cottage adjoining the Town Hall on the north side of Hawthorn

Road. The new Carnegie Baby Health Centre was to be constructed in Truganini Road near the children`s playground.

Thanks to a detailed report in *Prahran Telegraph* one can gain some idea of the design and dimensions of the proposed buildings recommended by the Health Committee.

£1100 to be placed on the Loan Schedule for a building next to the Town Hall be adhered to and an extra £800 added to the loan schedule for a new building at Carnegie. The Committee recommends that the building at Caulfield be made of brick with dimensions of 38 feet X 44 feet and be erected on land at the southern end next to the caretaker`s cottage. The building is to be provided with a waiting room 28 feet X 16 feet, a clinic 18 feet X 16 feet. A nurse`s room, a lavatory plus a wide verandah for perambulators and set back 20 feet from the building line. The Building Surveyor will serve all parts of Caulfield estimates the cost at £1100. The building, being on the tram line, will serve all parts of Caulfield apart from Carnegie and Murrumbeena. For this district, a separate centre is necessary and it is recommended that a brick building, about 30 feet X 30 feet, be created at the southern end of the children`s playground in Truganini Road. The building would be similar in design to that in Caulfield but with slightly smaller rooms. The Building Surveyor estimates the cost to be £800.

The Health Committee`s recommendations were adopted. (*Prahran Telegraph* Vol. 63 No. 3204 Friday 6 July 1923).



Above: Carnegie Baby Health Centre, Truganini Road, n.d. Opened in 1924 (Image GEHS collection).

On Saturday 3 May 1924, the new Carnegie Baby Health Centre in Truganini Road was opened by the Countess of Stradbroke. A salute was blown by the buglers of the guard of honour formed by the Carnegie and Glenhuntly Boy Scouts troops. This was followed by a reception in the Memorial Hall (*Caulfield News Vol. 5 No. 48 Thursday 8 May 1924*).

The Glenhuntly News reported that the Foundation Stone for the new Caulfield Baby Health Centre in Hawthorn Road was laid by the Mayoress Mrs. R. H. Lord (*Caulfield News Vol. 5 No.22 Thursday 22 May 1924*). It is unclear from the newspaper when the ceremony was held, probably on the previous Saturday 17 May 1924.



Above: Caulfield Baby Health Centre, opened in 1924 in Hawthorn Rd, adjacent to the Town Hall, n.d.
(Image GEHS collection)

Finally, the official opening of the new Baby Health Centre in Hawthorn Road next to the Town Hall was performed in the afternoon of Saturday 30 August 1924. It was performed by Sir George Cascaden, President of the Victorian Baby Health Centre Association. In addition to the clinic, a waiting room for mothers was provided with a frieze illustrating fairy stories for the entertainment of the children (*Caulfield News Vol. 5 No. 35 Friday 5 September 1924*).

Neville Daynes

Member Volunteer, Glen Eira Historical Society



CAULFIELD BABY HEALTH CENTRE OPENED

Little patrons of the new baby health centre at Caulfield, which was opened by Councillor Sir George Cuscaden (inset) on Saturday, were introduced to the specially constructed sand-pits for play by nursing sisters and helpers.

Above left to right: Miss C. Wharington, Mrs. E. Sadleir, Sister N. Wilson (in charge), Sister M. R. Rush, and Miss D. Belt (*The Argus (Melbourne 1848-1957)*, 1 September 1924, page 7).

LABASSA MANSION REOPENS

The Melbourne International Millinery Competition returned to Labassa with the theme of 'Little Black Dress'. It was the first function for 2021, held 21 February and the occasion marked a return to normality albeit with masks and timed entry.

Back for its fifth year, the Melbourne International Millinery Competition, with displays of millinery from leading milliners across Australia and overseas. The confections ranged from Hollywood glamour, to the elegantly restrained, to the outrageously theatrical. The hat displays were shown in the Drawing, Dining and Music Rooms.

Joy Mawbey

Member Volunteer, Glen Eira Historical Society



Above: The Melbourne International Millinery Competition at Labassa Mansion, Caulfield North, 2021.



Above: Labassa Mansion facade, 2021.



Above left: view from Labassa Mansion balcony featuring Hellenic inspired columns, 2021.

Above right: elaborate internal staircase, Labassa Mansion, Caulfield North, 2021.

(Images GEHS collection)

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Our volunteers returned to work on Tuesday 2 February 2021 with masks and hand sanitiser at the ready. We are now open by appointment only on Tuesday mornings and will review this arrangement over time.

Our work continues, cataloguing and recording new acquisitions to the collection and we hope to feature some of the items donated during 2020 in the next Newsletter.

We were recently visited by a university academic looking into the Indigenous history of the area and a PhD student from the University of New England in Armidale NSW who is researching the post-war planning and development of the East Bentleigh and South Oakleigh areas. Family history and house enquiries are constant and keep us busy.

We've been busy preparing for our exhibition ***Sights Unseen*** showing in the Glen Eira City Council Gallery Annexe from 25 March to 18 April 2021. We hope you will come along. Please check Council's website for gallery opening times. <https://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/our-city/arts-and-culture/galleries-and-visual-art/gallery>

Our **Speaker Series** will recommence on **Wednesday 26 May 2021 at 7.30pm**. Hopefully by then we will be able to meet in person but if not, our speaker Rebecca Le Get will present on Zoom. The title of her talk is *From sanatoria to urban bushland: an environmental history of Melbourne's former sites of tuberculosis treatment*. Further details will be advertised closer to the date.

This year we celebrate 100 years of Maternal and Child Health in Glen Eira. Some Baby Health Centre items will be included in our display at the Gallery. I hope you enjoy reading about the first Baby Health Centres in Caulfield and other items in this Newsletter.

Barbara Hoad
President, Glen Eira Historical Society

HERITAGE MATTERS

Here is the latest on some current heritage issues:

10-16 Selwyn Street Elsternwick (re Woolworths' entity Fabcot Pty Ltd) – the VCAT decision of 7/9/2020 refused the planning application. Council's Planning Register shows that on 15/2/2021, a new application was received which has a status of RFI (request for further information). Outline is: *Part demolition of the site and construction of a mixed use building of up to 10 storeys; use of the land for retail premises (supermarket, liquor store and kiosk), place of assembly, signage and for the sale of packaged liquor*. Looks like the start of a new process.

7 Selwyn St Elsternwick (Kadimah) – The Stop the

C190 Bentleigh and Carnegie – this is the formal proposal about the Heritage Review undertaken for the Bentleigh and Carnegie Structure Plan area (i.e. not the whole of those suburbs). Council adopted this Amendment at their meeting on 16/3/21 so it will now proceed to the final stage: seeking approval by the Minister for Planning.

C214 Post-war and Hidden Gems – this amendment covers the heritage review for properties/precincts from the late 1940s onwards, as well as a scan across the City of Glen Eira for precincts and properties which are standouts not previously included, for heritage protection. With a number of objections lodged (those in favour seldom do the required

Elsternwick Towers (STET) resident group is the lead objector at VCAT about Council's approval of the plans which include relocating the Jewish Museum of Australia to this address from St Kilda. The VCAT Compulsory Conference happened earlier in March 2021 but the proposal has now been "called in" by the Minister for Planning and he will make the decision on it.

While GEHS is not a party to the VCAT Hearing, we will keep advocating for the Duldig works (sculpture, stained glass windows and bronze plaques on the current front facade) to be retained as public art, or at least for them to be illuminated and clearly visible from the street.

430-434 Neerim Road Murrumbeena (former Woodlands supermarket) – the VCAT decision of 25/01/2021 upheld Council's decision to refuse the development proposal. VCAT knew that the Minister for Planning had by then approved Amendment C201 giving permanent heritage controls for the site and the broader centre. As one of the parties for the VCAT Hearing (along with others including a Murrumbeena residents' group), GEHS very much welcomes this decision.

Planning Amendments Summary (not all included)

See [Heritage next steps - Glen Eira City Council](#) | [Glen Eira City Council](#) for much more detail.

formal submissions), Council is expected to consider authorising the next stage (referral to a Planning Panel) at the Council meeting of 27/4/21.

C196 and C202 Elsternwick – these represent the locations approved by the Minister for Interim Heritage Orders valid to 30/7/21 and both have been directed to the now **C204 Elsternwick** to encompass the bid for these to gain permanent heritage protection. **The 5 properties and precincts (listed below) which the Minister did not approve for interim protection must now wait for the Elsternwick Structure Plan.** These are not currently heritage-protected per se: Glen Orrong Commercial Precinct, Elsternwick South Precinct, Elsternwick Interwar Residential Precinct, Gladstone Parade and College Precinct (minor extension of existing HO22) and Elsternwick North Precinct (extension of the existing Elsternwick HO72).

Next Issue, we will talk about the recent review from the Heritage Council of Victoria:

[The State of Heritage Review: Local Heritage | Heritage Council of Victoria](#)

Anne Kilpatrick, Secretary

Glen Eira Historical Society



Above: 430-434 Neerim Road, Murrumbidgee (GEHS collection).

GEHS Volunteers meet in Hopetoun Gardens, Elsternwick





On Friday 4 December 2020 our volunteers enjoyed the sunshine and a low-key BYO morning tea in Hopetoun Gardens to mark the end of 2020 - a year we didn't foresee but a year in which we still managed to keep local history alive. We were delighted to be joined by two of our former Monash student interns, Jamie and Joy.

We thank David Southwick MP for kindly donating the printing of this Newsletter

**March/April 2021 Newsletter editorial team:
Joy Mawbey and Adriana Konidaris**

EVENTS

Sights Unseen: an exhibition 25 March – 18 April 2021

An exhibition of items from Glen Eira Historical Society will be on display in Glen Eira City Council Gallery Annexe, from 25 March to 18 April 2021. The display will include photographs and objects from Caulfield Park, local sporting clubs, the Town Hall and Baby Health Centres.

Please check Council's website for gallery opening hours.

<https://www.gleneira.vic.gov.au/our-city/arts-and-culture/galleries-and-visual-art/exhibitions-and-programs>



Above: Caulfield Town Hall interior circa 1920s - 1930s prior to the remodelling of the auditorium. (GEHS collection)

Speaker Series 2021

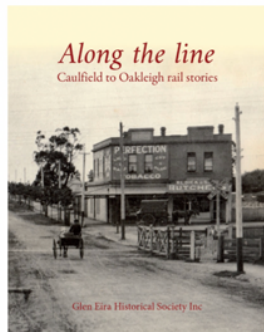
Wednesday 26 May 2021 at 7.30pm

Speaker: Rebecca Le Get

From sanatoria to urban bushland: an environmental history of Melbourne's former sites of tuberculosis treatment.

Venue: TBC

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: _____

Email: gehs@optusnet.com.au

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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 Murrumbeena

Community Bank - Murrumbeena

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Opening Hours

Open on Tuesdays 9am-12pm by appointment only

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