

CAULFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 202, Caulfield South, 3162

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NEWSLETTER

February 1973
25 cents

DEMOLITION

During January 1973, "GLENTANA" at 503 Glen Huntly Road, Elsternwick was demolished. This was one of the buildings which was being extensively researched for the Survey and Identification Committee of the National Trust. Preliminary research has indicated that the house was built for the architect Charles Webb. Sir Frank Gavan Duffy, a Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, was a tenant in the late 80's.

Several photographs of the house are held, and the Society is fortunate that two of its members had the foresight to make a measured drawing of the floor plan.

The Society recognises that some buildings need to be preserved, but many of those which are not worthy of preservation need to be recorded before they are destroyed. We must rely on our members and the public to bring these buildings to our notice so that appropriate records may be made before it is too late.

HONORARY MEMBER

The Society has elected its first honorary member.

Cr. F.A. Arden was elected as an honorary member at the general meeting held on 13 December 1972, in recognition of the major contribution which he made to the founding of the Society during his mayoral term and after.

Cr. Arden has been a member of the Caulfield City Council since 1965 and served as Mayor in 1971-72.

TRUST SURVEY

The National Trust Survey of Caulfield has been of great value to the Society. For, apart from a large photographic collection - over 100 buildings and objects of interest having been photographed and submitted for preliminary inspection by the Trust - the Society is beginning to acquire detailed research information on many buildings.

Nearly 1 in 3 of the initial submissions to the Trust has been returned for further research prior to later submission for classification. At the present time seventeen buildings are before the classification committee. A number of buildings not of interest to the Trust but of considerable local interest are being researched simultaneously with those for the Trust as many of the sources of information are the same.

There have been some exciting discoveries during this research work. Among the "finds" has been a house in Balaclava Road which, as far as authorities on the subject can tell, is a hitherto unrecognised building from the Walter Burley Griffin studios. "Myoora" in Alma Road appears to be a major architectural work by Anketell Henderson, a member of the firm of Reed, Henderson and Smart. The original plans for this house have also been located. Evidence has also been found to indicate that St. Mary's Anglican Church in Glen Eira Road is definitely the work of Joseph Reed of Reed and Barnes, predecessors of Reed, Henderson and Smart, and is made further notable by additions made by Thomas Cochrane. On a less grand scale is the Grange Road Congregational Church which was traced to its original location in South Melbourne where it served as a Primitive Methodist Chapel.

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HISTORIC CAULFIELD

THE HOWITTS AND "ROSEMONT"

by J. McCLURE, B.A., B.Ed.

There are two reminders in Caulfield of the Howitts: an old house in Kooyong Road called "Rosemont", and Howitt Street nearby. The Howitts were a gifted family with a wide range of talents, and made significant contributions in many fields including ethnology, literature, medicine, the civil service, botany and entomology. Dr. Howitt's "devotion to botany" (3) is perpetuated in the name *Howittia Trilocularis* given by Baron von Mueller (of Melbourne Botanic Gardens fame) to a violet flowered evergreen shrub with heart-shaped leaves. (6) The members of the family associated with Caulfield are Dr. Godfrey Howitt, one of Melbourne's pioneer doctors, and his nephew Alfred William Howitt, explorer, civil servant and scientist. John Bakewell, brother-in-law of Godfrey, is also connected with Caulfield's early history through his land purchases, (1) some allotments being adjacent to Dr. Howitt's. Robert Bakewell, the other brother-in-law, became a founder of the firm Goldsborough, Mort & Co. (4)

Godfrey Howitt was born on 8 October 1800 in Derbyshire into a Quaker family, (2) (4) and later studied medicine at Edinburgh. He practised for some years in England and also built a European reputation as an entomologist and botanist. (3)(4) In 1839, he emigrated to Australia on board the 'Lord Goderich', for the sake of his eldest son's health. (5) With him were his family, his wife Phoebe, and his brothers-in-law John and Robert Bakewell. (4)(5)

Dr. Howitt quickly established a practice in a prefabricated wooden cottage he had imported from England and which he erected at the corner of Collins and Spring Streets, then on the outskirts of the infant town of Melbourne. He remained at this site for nearly thirty years, the land he had bought soaring in value, particularly in the wild gold-rush years of the 1850's. Over the

years Dr. Howitt acquired considerable landed interests - 7,000 acres near Cape Schank; (5) a partnership in Murrindindi station near Yea for a short time; (8) and about 110 acres in Caulfield. (5) He was one of the original grantees of land in Caulfield, taking a total of four allotments on either side of Kooyong Road between Glen Eira and Balaclava Roads. In this area he established a farm, (4) and in 1869-70 built his fifteen room country house "Rosemont". (3)(9)

Dr. Godfrey Howitt's contribution to Melbourne's development as a city was considerable. In 1847, when the (Royal) Melbourne Hospital was established, Godfrey Howitt was one of the first three honorary physicians. (4) In the same year, he was President and honorary physician of the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum. (3) He was an original council member of the University of Melbourne 1853, (4) and in 1854-55 was the first vice-president of what later became the Royal Society of Victoria. (3)

"Rosemont" is an unusually compactly designed house for its age. There is a minimum of hall space, and the men servant's rooms are not separate from the house which was usually the case. A single storey gable-roofed carriage way at the front of the house connects it to some of the outbuildings, while the rest of the Men's rooms form part of the rear of the house. The small verandah at the back of the house has an unusually massive timber roof beam and support. The house itself is a two storey building of hand-made bricks, with textural relief offered by polychrome decoration over the window arches, and elegant pillars flanking the downstairs windows. The chimneys are of interest for the "statuary niches" in their construction. Originally, the second storey had a handsome cast iron verandah above the arched brick portico, however this was removed many years ago. The stables along Balaclava Road (7) have also disappeared.

Inside, the house is more impressive than its altered external appearance would suggest. The hallways in both storeys have massively elaborate high relief arches, and most of the ceilings are of embossed leather which is also found on the hall walls downstairs.

The remaining ceilings are pressed metal, the one in the dining room being particularly ornate in design, with matchingly ornate cornices. The original marble fireplaces still exist, the dining room fireplace being a restrained "squared-pillar" style giving an impression of formality. The fireplace in the master bedroom upstairs is very attractive and suitable for a bedroom; it is of simple style, in white marble, with delicate pink lily blooms on the tile surround. There were two staircases in the house, the back stairs, still in use, and the main stairs which have been removed. A trap-door which used to be under the main staircase gives access to a large wine cellar which also has an iron safe in one wall.

On 13 September 1852, Dr. Howitt's nephew, Alfred William Howitt, aged 22, had arrived in Melbourne on board the 'Kent'.⁽⁵⁾ Alfred spent the next two years prospecting on the Victorian gold-fields, and then, between 1854 and 1859 farmed his uncle's land in Caulfield for a short time.⁽⁴⁾ Thus the Howitts were among some of the first settlers in the area. Alfred later led the Burke and Wills relief expedition, the rescue of King by Howitt's party being depicted on one of the bas-relief panels on the Burke and Wills monument in Spring Street.⁽⁴⁾

In 1863 Alfred Howitt became Warden of the Goldfields and Protector of the

Aborigines in Gippsland; and Secretary for Mines in Victoria in 1889. ⁽²⁾⁽⁵⁾ During this time he did notable work in petrology and in studying the language of the aborigines under his charge. He was also responsible, indirectly, for the clearing of Rome's malarial swamps,⁽⁵⁾ the eucalyptus seeds he collected from the children in Gippsland being sent to his father in Rome. He planted them in the marshy ground which was drained as the young eucalypts, with their greedy water consumption, grew to maturity.

Thus, for about twenty years, Caulfield was linked with another of the many prominent families who helped shape Melbourne life, and who lived in the Caulfield area.

References:

1. Foot survey maps, 1853
2. Mennell, P. The Dictionary of Australasian Biography.
3. Pike, D. Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol. 4
4. Howitt, M.E.B. The Howitts in Australia, Vic. Historical Magazine, Vol.3, 1913
5. Henderson, A. Pastoral Pioneers of Victoria and the Riverina.
6. Lord, E. Shrubs and Trees for Australian Gardens
7. M.M.B.W. survey map 1905
8. Billis & Kenyon, Pastoral Pioneers of Port Phillip
9. Caulfield rate books.

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs. L. Bolton
Miss M. Denton
Miss C. Close

DONATION

The Society wishes to thank Mr. Walter Reeves of Elsternwick for the gift of a framed photograph of the winning billiards team for 1934/35 of the now defunct ELSTERNWICK MEN'S CLUB.

TRAMWAYS

Members of the Society were fortunate to hear Mr. Keith Kings speak about Melbourne's tramways at the meeting held on 13 December. Mr. Kings described the early systems of tramways and their evolution from horses to cables then to electricity. Details of the openings of tram routes through Caulfield were also covered. Of special interest was information concerning the Caulfield Horse Tram which ran from Elsternwick to the Caulfield and Glen Huntly railway stations between 1889 and 1905.

Mr. Kings has recently been elected Chairman of The Tramway Museum Society of Victoria Ltd.

TRUST SURVEY (continued)

Information is also being discovered about many demolished buildings, such as "Merton", the remnant of which survives in Avoca Grove, and about many of the early citizens of Caulfield; William Murray Ross, John Crosbie who laid the foundation stone of the Shire Hall in 1884; and families such as the Webbs, Stephens and Langdons.

The avenues for research which the Trust survey has revealed are almost unlimited, for the people who inhabited the buildings and the events in which they took part provide a richness to the historical development of Caulfield which must inevitably be investigated.

CORRECTION

In the last NEWSLETTER it was reported that the Trust survey was being carried out by Trust and Caulfield High School members. The survey was, in fact, made by members of the National Trust and Caulfield Historical Society, with the latter doing the further research required for the Trust classification committee.

LA TROBE LIBRARY VISIT

21 February 1972

A visit to the LA TROBE Library, La Trobe Street, Melbourne, has been arranged for Wednesday 21 February. Members will be shown through the library by guides and will see the many sections that go to make Victoria's most important historical research centre.

Members should meet in the Exhibition Hall at 7-45p.m. for the tour although, since the exhibition "Victoria's Catholic Story" will be on display for the Eucharistic Congress, it is recommended that those interested be earlier.

Numbers will be strictly limited for the tour and those interested in attending should phone the Hon. Secretary (53 3854 - night) by 19 February so that arrangements can be finalised.

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ORIGINS OF CAULFIELD STREET NAMES

A'BECKETT Street (St Kilda East) Emma Minnie A'Beckett married, on 23 November 1886, Arthur Merric Boyd, son of Captain John Theodore Boyd of "Glenfern" (corner of Hotham Street and Inkerman Road). Thomas Turner A'Beckett also lived nearby in Alma Road.

AIRDRIE Road (Caulfield) Named after a dairy and market garden in Kooyong Road owned by George Hope.

BEAVIS Street (Elsternwick) George Beavis was a longtime resident in Glen Huntly Rd.

BENT Street (Elsternwick) Nearby "Rippon Lea" was owned by Sir Thomas Bent, Premier of Victoria.

BLAKE Street (Caulfield) Arthur Palmer Blake, a founder of the law firm of Blake and Riggall, lived at "Bramerton".

BLENCAIRN Avenue (Caulfield) "Blencairn" was the home of the Slaney family in Hawthorn Road; this family was amongst the original grantees of land in Caulfield and later donated land for St. Margaret's Anglican Church in Glen Eira Road.

BRAMERTON Road (Caulfield) "Bramerton" in Bamba Road, was built in 1880 for A.P.Blake.