

June 1973
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NEWSLETTER

CAULFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P.O. Box 202, Caulfield South, 3162

MEETINGS

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Society will be held at the CITY OF MOORABBIN HISTORICAL RESEARCH CENTRE on 20th June. Mr. T.A. Sheehy, who is the City's Historical Research Officer, will describe the functions of the Centre which is sponsored by the City of Moorabbin.

Members should meet at 8-00pm. at the Centre, 22 McFARLANE COURT, MOORABBIN (first street off Nepean Highway after Wickham Road).

ANNUAL MEETING

The Society's first Annual Meeting will be held on 15th August. Mr. Peter Staughton, Chairman of the Survey and Identification Committee of the National Trust will be the guest speaker.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE

The Society's annual subscriptions are:-

Ordinary Member	\$3.00
Student Member	.50c
Family Member	\$5.00
Corporate Member	\$5.00
Life Member	\$100.00

Subscriptions are due on 1 July each year.

NEW MEMBERS

Miss I. Anderson, Caulfield
Mrs. C.S. Elliot, Beaumaris
Mr. & Mrs. D.E. Perry, Caulfield

DONATIONS

The Society has been presented with the following items and our thanks to the donors is recorded:

Report and Appeal of the "Christmas Letter Mission", Victoria December 1889. Supplement to "The Southern Cross", 29 November 1889

Inscription from a book presented to Mrs. George Henry Frederick Webb by Edmund Gerald FitzGibbon on 19 May 1856

Handbill - Caulfield Common School Programme for Musical Entertainment and Readings in aid of the Building Fund, Monday, 11 November 1867.

HONOURED

Rt. Rev. Monsignor Brian Walsh of St. Joseph's Church, Elsternwick, has been created an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the Queen's birthday honours for his services as director of the 40th Eucharist Congress.

"Yesterday morning at an early hour, a horse carrying a lady's saddle and bridle, was found quietly grazing by the roadside, Caulfield. The animal was cased in mud, and to the crutch of the saddle a goodly portion of a lady's riding habits was fluttering in the breeze. As the hunt passed that way on Saturday did any fair one come to grief? and if so, where is she?" "HERALD", Monday, 8 July 1872

HISTORIC CAULFIELD

"LIRREWA" ...

by J. O'DONNELL, B.A., B.Ed.

The land on which "Lirrewa" now stands is part of the original subdivision (lot 6) granted to 'Thomas Fulton and others'. The entire area (except the extreme NW block) bounded by Glen Eira, Hawthorn, Glen Huntly and Kooyong Roads, a total of seven holdings, was held by Fulton; as well as many other allotments in Caulfield.(4) There is now a Fulton Street in St. Kilda East, near the cemetery.

"Lirrewa" was built in 1886 for Montague William Langdon, the eldest son of Henry Joseph Langdon of "Rosecraddock", probably as a home for his second wife Elizabeth.(6) At this stage the property was called "Tarqua". On 22 October 1889, what "promised to be a brilliant mercantile and public career" was suddenly cut short by M.W. Langdon's death.(6) There is a brief memorial inscription to him in St. Mary's Church, Caulfield.(3)

In 1891 the house was occupied by Dr. Tennant, and it then became the property of Dr. James Cox for the next fifteen years. It was probably Dr. Cox who changed the name of the house to "Lirrewa".(2) James Cox, like M.W. Langdon, also had close associations with St. Mary's, and served as a vestry man for a short period.(3)

After Dr. Cox, "Lirrewa" had a number of occupants who stayed only a short time, and also several periods when it was vacant. An early M.M.B.W. map (1905) shows the property as extending from its present southern boundary and present western boundary to the edge of the Town Hall block, and fronting onto Hawthorn Road.(5) It was like this in the 1920's when it was bought by Walter Richard Brooks, after the City Council had rejected the opportunity to purchase it, (7) when offered by its then owner Percy Bryce. Mr. Brooks, a member of the Council, had tried to persuade the Council to purchase the property, and it is of interest that some of the land has since become Council property, e.g. the Baby Health Centre.* In 1922 and 1943 Mr. Brooks was Mayor of Caulfield.(1)

The subdivision of the land for housing, and the creation of Lirrewa Grove occurred in 1927.(2) In order to provide sufficient land for 5 Lirrewa Grove the western boundary of "Lirrewa" was altered to an irregular shape, with the result that the stables are at the rear of the boundary line of No.5.

When the house was built, the western side of Hawthorn Road had only the newly built Shire Hall and an older, neighbouring mansion "Sylverly" of which nothing now remains except a street name. The area further south in the block was occupied by market gardens, chiefly Chinese.(5)(2)

The house itself has a number of features unusual for a building of the 1880's. To compensate for the slope of the land, the front of the house has been built on an artificial mound and the verandah placed directly on top of this, lacking the bluestone foundations and tiled floor common to the period. The decoration of the verandah is not cast iron as one might expect but simple timber roof brackets and frieze. Some of the gables retain their cast iron ridging ornamentation and iron "fountains".

At the rear of the house are the elegant brick stables, still in excellent condition and only slightly altered from their original state. A handsome cast iron weather vane sits above the hay loft.

The interior of the house has been adapted for flats, chiefly affecting the servants quarters and the less 'public' rooms. Three of the rooms, the reception rooms of the 1880's, have their original marble mantels, including one with commanding marble pillars on each side. An interesting feature as one enters the house is the niches on each side of the hall arch-way, with their marble ledges.

The shape of the arch-way itself is unusual, and is duplicated at the end of the hallway which has doors closing off the rest of the house from view.

The main windows have geometric designs in leadlight panes, and the main panels of the windows are further broken into geometric shapes by wooden frames.

"LIRREWA" *continued*

There are unusual timber stencils over the main doorways and over the side windows of the bedroom. Over the centre window there is a different, more elaborate design. The design of these windows themselves is of interest; the centre window is full length, but the complementary side windows are only three-quarter length.

References:

1. "Southern Cross" 20 May 1964
2. Directories 1885-1928
3. St. Mary's Church records
4. Foot survey maps, 1853
5. M.M.B.W. survey maps, 1905
6. Henderson, A. Australian Families, Vol.1
7. Mrs. W.R. Brooks
8. Caulfield rate books
9. Pike, D. Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol.4

* Additional land on the North side of Lirrewa Grove has recently been acquired by the Council. (Ed.)

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EARLY CAULFIELD

by Mrs. A.P. Bell

In November, 1857, thirty-nine Caulfield residents set out along driving tracks amid dense gum trees, to elect representatives from among themselves in order to constitute the Caulfield Road District Board. They met in the Caulfield School-room, possibly in Glen Eira Road, and elected, by majority vote, members of that first Road Board. The first minute-book of their proceedings and decisions is preserved in the Caulfield Town Hall.

The Board had the right to levy tolls and rates for the purpose of financing affairs of its local administration.

Early road tolls were levied on livestock as it passed along the main roads; the usual charges were one farthing or one half-penny per head on sheep and goats, one penny or two-pence on cattle, six-pence on horses, and so on. From the beginning, Caulfield Road Board levied a rate on property, and the first rate book, like the first minute book, is now a historic document within Caulfield, in the town hall.

In the names of Caulfield districts, roads, streets and houses, the influence of the early aboriginal inhabitants still lingers. To drive through Caulfield and enquire about these names is to bring to life the language of the most primitive peoples on earth. It is possible that Murrumbeena was the name of the camping ground of the group-family of an outstanding and powerful native policeman named Murrum Murrumbeen, whose moral character was renowned. Some say the name is derived from "Mirambeena", meaning "you" or "belonging to you", and elderly residents born in the district say they thought it meant land of frogs - there was a large swamp in the district in those days; it has since been drained and built on.

Such aboriginal influences can also be seen in the names of Caulfield roads and streets, Kooyong meaning resting place; Neerim, long or high; Bambra, a mushroom; and so on.

A very early resident has left a description of a native corroboree which he witnessed at Elsternwick, a German name meaning village of magpies. This district is described as a dense forest of tall gum trees; two of the original ones can still be seen in Greenmeadows gardens, once part of "Greenmeadows" House (early home of the Lemprieres). The corroboree was held on the site that is now "Rippon Lea" House. The writer describes how "we stayed until midnight, mixing with the blacks, listening to their chants and watching the strange and grave dances of the corroboree circle".

In such a background, when domestic water was gathered from roof-catchments or carried in buckets from barrels sunk near natural springs, the whole district became known as Caulfield.

MORE ABOUT "CRAIGELLACHIE"

As a result of an article about the Society published in the 'Chadstone Progress' on 14 March, 1973, the Society has received a letter from Mrs. C. Sibley Elliot, a one-time resident of "Craigellachie". The letter says:

"My father, the late Percy Thomson, bought the house at the end of the 1914-18 war and we were established there when my eldest brother came home from his long war service in the middle of 1919.

It was a most beautiful family home and the whole of it was used for that purpose, there being nine children, our parents, one grandmother and oftentimes a 'living-in' domestic. My father, who loved his home --- kept it in perfect order and we all loved it.

It was bounded on three sides by Lynedoch Avenue, Orrong Road, and Inkerman Street. On the Lynedoch Avenue side was a large ballroom and as three of us were married from "Craigellachie" our wedding receptions were held there. The ballroom has long since gone. The upstairs room referred to as a ballroom in one report was originally a billiard room, used in our time as a sewing room. The other upstairs rooms, possibly servants' quarters originally, but used by our family, consisted of a bathroom, a linen room and two bedrooms.

On the ground floor, off the hallway through the etched-glass panel doors referred to in the 'Chadstone Progress' report, were three bedrooms and a bathroom, a breakfast-room, a large smoke-room, a large cloak room and telephone room, a linen room above a cellar, extra toilet facilities, a butler's pantry and, at the extreme back, another small bedroom. In addition, there was a huge kitchen with pantry and scullery off it, the latter two as well as the laundry having tiled floors that must surely have been the envy of all who saw them.

The kitchen, apparently now unused, was a wonderful place. As well as the large double 'Lux' fire stove we also had a large table model gas stove. Every couple of months when it was time for

the chimney sweep to come my father would put the money for him on the side of the stove. He came at the crack of dawn, swept the chimney, took his money, and was not often seen. In those wonderful days we never shut or locked doors and windows.

Behind the original ballroom were a bricked stable yard and buildings -- stable, cow bail, harness room, feed room, and man's room. We used to keep a cow, horse and sulky, and there was ample land behind those buildings for grazing and for vegetable gardens. Those buildings, of course, are gone now.

After my father's early death my mother kept the home for some years, having at that time four young children. She sold it about 1930, to a Scottish building firm whose name I can't remember-- one of them was a great performer on the pipes. I think it was from them that it was bought by the Saints, a French family who so enjoyed there time here before they returned to France they gave to Melbourne the statue that stands at the northern end of the conservatory in the Fitzroy Gardens. I do not think "Craigellachie" was ever a boys' school.

The hall and the verandahs at "Craigellachie" are Italian tilework but it is named after a place in Scotland beloved of fisherman.

The three large front rooms referred to in the press report as 'public' rooms were, in our time, used as a drawing room, a dining room and a main bedroom.

Now how tragic it is to see so beautiful a place hidden by flats right up to its windows. Where before all the rooms on that side, even the kitchen, looked over the garden, now it is bricks, bricks and more bricks.

Will the little children of today have anything beautiful to look at when they grow up? It is obvious to all that architects today have no beauty in their eyes. We who were young 60 or 70 years ago have a lot to remember and be thankful for."

*Subsequent examination of the tilework referred to indicates that it is English, from the Minton works. (Ed.)