

# CAULFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 202, Caulfield South, 3162

98  
10 NEWSLETTER

April June 1974  
20 cents

## MEETINGS

JUNE 1974

The next meeting of the Society will be held on Wednesday, 19th June, 1974 at 8pm. The meeting will be held in the auxiliaries meeting room situated in the "old" post office opposite the Town Hall in Hawthorn Road.

The subject of the lecture will be "RIPPONLEA" and the speaker Mr. Frank Strahan, University of Melbourne Archivist. Mr. Strahan has spent considerable time researching the history of this fabulous property and has collaborated in the preparation of the National Trust guide book. He is also the author of an article on the property which will be published in the third volume of the series 'Historic Buildings of Australia' being published by the Australian Council of National Trusts. Mr. Strahan has also contributed articles to the Australian Dictionary of Biography and other publications.

AUGUST 1974

The August meeting will be held on Wednesday 21st August. The speaker on that night will be Mr. D.W.M. Grant, F.H.G., President of the recently formed 'Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies'. Mr. Grant's subject will be "LOCAL HISTORY AND THE GENEALOGIST"

## NEW MEMBERS

Miss B.A. Snowball, Elsternwick  
Mr. & Mrs. C.C. Symon, East St Kilda

APRIL 1974

The last meeting of the Society was held at the Town Hall on 17th April and members were privileged to hear Professor J.R. Poynter speak on the subject of "The Grimwade Family". Against a general background of the family history, Professor Poynter was able to provide interesting information about their residence in the Caulfield area. He illustrated his lecture with descriptions of Caulfield at the turn of the century written by Russell Grimwade. A highlight of the night was the members opportunity to examine several albums of photographs taken by Russell between 1898 and 1910.

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## NATIONAL TRUST CLASSIFICATION

### CLASSIFIED

"LISBON HOUSE"  
70 Orrong Road, Elsternwick

"A large boom-style house of 1890 of terrace form and with a stuccoed front of distinctive design, especially in respect of the parapet with its triple-pedimented centre motif and the antae or wing walls each built up of a vermiculated base course acanthus band, foliated panels, arcuated and trabeated bays, deep cornice, plinth and urn; in the interior is embossed leather panelling.



## THOMAS CHRISTIAN AND "MYOORA"

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

A photograph of one of the city's largest old mansions is featured on the cover of the Caulfield Historical Society's membership application form. The house is "Myoora", standing in Alma Road near its intersection with Hawthorn and Dandenong Roads. Like "Craigellachie" in Orrong Road, it is the result of its owner's good fortune on the gold'fields. In each case the owner was a large shareholder in one of the fabled gold mines in Australian mining history - the Day Dawn at Charters Towers and the Long Tunnell at Walhalla. (For an account of William Pearson of "Craigellachie" and the Long Tunnell Mine see Caulfield Historical Society Newsletter No.1. Ed.) However, a gap of twenty years separates the stories of the two mansions and their owners.

The things that strike one's attention about "Myoora" are its massive size, and its architectural similarity, at least on the north front, to an eighteenth century French chateau. Eminently practical concessions to the Australian climate and to convenient living were made in the design of the back of the house. Along its entire length it features an elaborate two-storey cast-iron balcony of the type which is normally the crowning glory of the front of many lesser mansions. Facing south as they do, the verandah and balcony provide an area away from the influence of the hot northern sun. Additionally, the balcony provides splendid views of the bay and surrounding countryside to the south and west. The back of the house clearly was not intended for the servants, since many of the largest and most gracious rooms open on to the balcony or verandah; rather the servants' quarters were moved away from the family area to the western end of the house, cushioned in their segregation by the night nursery upstairs and the day nursery downstairs.

The central feature of the main facade is the square, four-storey tower with its cantilevered cast-iron balcony. The base of the tower forms an impressive entrance portal to the solid front door framed in its stained glass, high arched surround. An identical doorway inside separates the main part of the house

from the servants' area. Inside the front door a spacious hallway originally gave access to a cedar staircase which has now been removed. The upper part of the walls in the main entrance section still retains the embossed leather which was used to cover them. In the same area of the house is a somewhat unusual feature, which is easily understood when the gold-fields interests of "Myoora" 's owner are recalled. Incorporated into the building is a solid bank strongroom with steel door - few great mansion homes can boast one of these.

The tower is balanced by a two-storey wing with a slate roofed turret. At the base of the turret can be seen the ventilation window for the two-room bluestone wine cellars beneath, which are reached by steep descent under the cedar turret stair. An unusual feature of the turret is the barred glass window on the landing. Immediately to the right of the turret is a doorway created from an original pantry window when "Myoora" was converted to flats in 1939. Near the top of the turret is a wide band of tudor rose design which is matched above the arch of the portico. The turret, like the roof ridges is surmounted by an elegant iron finial. The roof of the servants' wing is crowned by an ornamental cast iron ridging partially obscured from the roadway by a tall row of chimneys which help to balance the height of the tower.

An external stairway, reasonably well camouflaged, hides the remainder of the facade, which was very plain, (14) to counter-act the ornateness of the central section. It should be noted that this stairway is a modern addition.

On the east front, on the upper storey, is a small semi-circular corbelled balcony, poised above twin arched windows, complemented by a heavy two-storey angular bay capped by a roof finial. The rooms in this section, which included the two main bedrooms and the morning room, are exceptionally large and feature highly ornate ceilings and impressive fireplaces.

The whole exterior appearance of the house presents an unusual combination of architectural ideas, all however held carefully in proportion and balanced skilfully against each other.



## THOMAS CHRISTIAN AND "MYOORA" contd.

In its early days, before the subdivision of the original land occurred, "Myoora" boasted a large, solidly built coach-house west of the house on the Alma Road frontage. The bluestone base is still visible as part of the front fence of the adjoining property; the plans, by the same architect as the house, survive to show us what used to be.



Thomas Christian (1845-1890)

Thomas Christian, for whom "Myoora" was built, was born in 1845 at Douglas (13) on the Isle of Man, the son of Elizabeth (2) and John Christian. At about the age of 20 he emigrated to Victoria and was, for a short time a dairy farmer in the Broadmeadows area.

In 1872, gold was discovered at Charters Towers, Queensland, and Thomas was amongst the wave of prospectors who arrived in April of that year. The first two years were apparently spent prospecting small claims in the Millchester area, but with little success.

During 1874 he became associated with William Ievers and Frederick Pfeiffer and the three became partners in the leasehold of the Day Dawn Mine. The original lease of this area had been taken up and discarded several times by prospectors who had failed to locate payable gold. By this time, Thomas Christian was an experienced quartz miner, and a clever, shrewd man of determined character. He was appointed manager and dis-

carded the old vertical shaft and erected steam hauling machinery. For four years they searched for payable returns; in 1876 the mine produced a miserable 29 ounces (10) of gold.

In 1877 (1)(2) Thomas Christian married Violet Mary Neumann of Richmond, Victoria; the first of their eight children arriving in May of the following year. At the same time, and perhaps providentially, Pfeiffer's insistence that they persevere with the mine at last paid off.

By 1879, the three partners were becoming moderately wealthy men, but re-invested in the mine, adding machinery and techniques which could lead to greater production and the expansion of the claim. Returns over the next two years justified their action as the Day Dawn Production rose.

On 11 October 1881 (4) a company, the Day Dawn P.C. Gold Mining Company Limited, was formed to facilitate even greater expansion. Thomas Christian held 5,250 shares out of a total of 24,000 shares. The next year, 1882 (4), saw him selecting 1,280 acres of land near Charters Towers, next to the selection made on the same day by Pfeiffer. The Deed of Grant was issued on 15 January 1889 (4) after the necessary conditions of residence had been fulfilled. It is not known whether Thomas ever lived at this property; certainly his growing family remained in Melbourne, living in a house in Parkville before "Myoora" was built in Caulfield.



"Myoora" c.1890



## THOMAS CHRISTIAN AND "MYOORA" (contd.)

"Myoora", aboriginal for "resting place" or "camp", was built on 19 acres of land purchased in 1885-86 from John Charles Lloyd (6). Anketell Henderson, a member of the famous Melbourne architectural firm of Reed, Henderson and Smart, designed the house, which was started in 1886 (7). Two years later it comprised 15 rooms and by 1891 it had reached its ultimate size of 32 rooms (6).

In 1887, while the building was in progress under the supervision of a clerk of works (8), Thomas Christian was still active in the Day Dawn P.C., going to England to float a new company which had a paid up capital of £490,000 (12). In 1888 (4) when the old company went into liquidation, Thomas received nearly 114,000 in dividends and commission, no mean sum even in today's terms. When the new owners arrived, the original partners left the district, but all returned for short periods. Thomas Christian died at Charters Towers on 3 September 1890 (9) having never seen the completion of his mansion in Caulfield and apparently having spent most of his life away from Melbourne. He left behind him a widow of 33 with eight children, including a baby of only seven months (2), a huge mansion, a large fortune, and a fascinating contribution to the local history of two widely separated areas. Mrs. Christian continued to live in the house until her death in 1930 (1)(11), so the story of the house is largely her story.



Violet Mary Christian ( -1931)

At the time of her husband's death Violet Christian was not only an exceedingly wealthy woman, but also still young and, as photographs indicate, very attractive. She did not therefore, lack opportunity to re-marry, but decided against it. In later years, she is remembered by one of her grandsons (2) as a powerful and dignified woman, well accustomed to being head of a household, a woman who was kind and generous, yet one to whom due deference was expected and given. Her personality is well illustrated by her decision to take her entire family, whose ages ranged from nine to twenty one years, on an extended visit to England and Europe in 1899. In 1911, when her fourth daughter, Grace, married Henry Caselli Richards, later Professor of Geology and Mineralogy in the University of Queensland, the reception was held at "Myoora" where the wedding breakfast was served in a large marquee set up in the grounds. The house was frequently invaded by grand-children, for, with the exception of the eldest son Arthur who remained at "Myoora" until his mother's death, all the children married.

"Myoora" was reluctantly placed on the market by the family in 1931 and was sold to the Brooke family who retained the house until 1972. In 1939, it was converted into flats and remains so today. "Myoora" is unusual not only in its architecture and its history, but also in the fact that it has remained in the hands of only two families since it was built, which is perhaps what has enabled the original architect's drawings to survive to the present day.

#### Editor's Note

Table Talk of 24 October 1890 reported that Thomas Christian's will, dated 5 March 1883, was lodged for probate by Messrs. A. Grant and Son. Mrs. Christian was appointed executrix and David Miles, accountant, and George James Lever, bank manager both of Charters Towers were appointed as executors. Under the will, furniture, musical instruments and personal effects were left to Violet Christian for life. The trustees to realise the estate and pay the income to his widow who was to maintain and educate the children during their minority. On her death or re-marriage the estate to pass in equal shares to the children. The value of the property sworn in Victoria was given as real \$91,000 and personal £46,000. A total of £137,000.



## THOMAS CHRISTIAN AND "MYOORA" (contd.)

## REFERENCES

1. Miss K. Trumble
2. Mr. R. Trumble
3. Charters Towers & Dalrymple Shire Historical Society
4. Queensland State Archives
5. 'Northern Miner', 1972 Centenary Supplement
6. Caulfield Rate books
7. Original Architect's drawings
8. "Myoora" sale brochure 1931
9. Obituary 'Argus' 9 Sep. 1890
10. Springer, E.V. (ed) Glimpses of Glory, Charters Twoers Centenary 1872-1972
11. Mrs. Brooke
12. Nash, R.L. Australasian Joint Stock Companies Year Book, 1900
13. Trumble, R.W. The Golden Age of Cricket, Melb. 1968
14. Photographs, Caulfield Historical Soc.

## CAULFIELD ROAD BOARD

## THE EARLY MEETINGS

Information relating to the formation of the Caulfield Road Board is presently being researched by members of the Society. Many sources are being investigated, including early editions of the Victoria Government Gazette, the 'Argus' and particularly the Caulfield City Council's own records. The Rate books and Minute books of the Council are very complete and are providing a wealth of information. The earliest record in the Council archives appears to be the minute of the first meeting of the elected Road Board held on 28 November 1857. This minute is reproduced below with permission. It records the purely formal preliminaries which the Board had to cope with at its first meeting. The minutes of the former meetings referred to do not appear to have survived.

"AT A MEETING OF THE BOARD, HELD IN THE SCHOOL ROOM ON SATURDAY THE 28TH NOVEMBER 1857

Present Messrs. Harris, Brooks, Semple, Handasyde, Nelson and Dempsey  
Mr. Gilbert Handasyde was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Board for the ensuing year.

The consideration of minutes of former meetings postponed until next meeting.

Mr Harris was requested to procure tracings of the district and the Secretary was desired to make a formal application to the survey office for same.

Ordered that the Secretary do notify the Central Road Board the formation of the Board and election of the members and to request that a copy of the Government Gazette and such other documents as are usually furnished to District Road Boards be supplied for the information of the Board.

Ordered that advertisements be inserted for an assessor, in the Herald and Argus three times in each.

The Board guaranteed the payment of the preliminary expenses for items to be produced at next meeting.

Ordered that the Board meet every alternate Saturday at 4 o'clock PM next meeting to be on the 12th Decr. 1857 and that for the present the School Room be used as an Office and Board Room, a sum of 5/- a meeting be allowed as rent.

Resolved that an application be forthwith made to the Govt. for a grant of £5,000 to be placed upon the estimates for the ensuing year, and that the Chairman and Mr. Brooks be requested to solicit the co-operation of the several members of the Legislature who are interested in the District.

Mr. Dempsey was appointed to act as Honorary Secy. until the appointment of a paid Secy.

Ordered that the Secretary be authorised to procure a Minute Book and the necessary stationery and also a tin Box to keep the documents of the Board in, and to incur such other incidental expenses as may be required by the Road Act, to be repaid out of the first monies available, the Board in the meantime individually and collectively guaranteeing the repayment of same."

(sgnd.) G. Handasyde  
Chairman



## CAULFIELD BIBLIOGRAPHY

### NEWSPAPERS

The State Library of Victoria holds a comprehensive collection of newspapers published in Caulfield. These, together with papers published in the adjoining municipalities of Brighton, Malvern, Oakleigh, and Prahran, contain an important record of Caulfield's history. The following list gives details of issues available in the State Library - dates shown are not necessarily inclusive dates of publication of the papers concerned. The symbol W indicates a weekly publication.

#### CAULFIELD

CAULFIELD & ELSTERNWICK LEADER W  
July 1887 - 1902  
from July 1887 until 11 Feb. 1888 this paper was published as Elsternwick Leader

CAULFIELD & ELSTERNWICK MERCURY W  
Mar 1901 - 18 Jan. 1902 ceased

CAULFIELD & ELSTERNWICK STAR W  
June 1889 - 22 Feb. 1890 ceased

CAULFIELD & ELSTERNWICK TIMES  
15 Apr. 1893 - June 1906  
from 30 June 1906 continued as  
St Kilda & Caulfield Southern Cross

CAULFIELD - ELSTERNWICK ADVERTISER W  
13 May - 9 Oct. 1959 ceased  
title formerly Glenhuntly Advertiser changed from Jan. 1949. In 1948, May to Dec. the Glenhuntly Advertiser, Elsternwick Advertiser, & Caulfield Advertiser were identical papers. incorporated in the Caulfield Southern Advertiser 9 Oct. 1959

CAULFIELD MERCURY & GLENHUNTLY GUARDIAN  
17 Sep 1936 - 18 Nov. 1937 W

CAULFIELD NEWS W  
22 May 1919 - Oct. 1924  
incorporates Glenhuntly News

CAULFIELD STAR W  
25 Mar. 1938 - 13 Dec. 1938

SOUTHERN CROSS  
9 Oct. 1959 -  
formed by merger of Caulfield -  
Elsternwick Advertiser, Carnegie  
Courier, The Prahran News, and the  
St Kilda News. Entitled Southern  
Advertiser to 12 Jun. 1962

#### CARNEGIE

CARNEGIE COURIER  
14 Sep. 1949 - 9 Oct. 1959 ceased  
incorporated in Caulfield Southern  
Advertiser.

THE OBSERVER W  
16 Oct. 1931 - 24 Mar. 1932  
the first seven issues of this paper  
were published in Carnegie, the  
remainder at Oakleigh.

SOUTH EAST SUBURBAN MAIL W  
19 Feb. 1959 - 15 Feb. 1962 ceased

#### ELSTERNWICK

ELSTERNWICK & CAULFIELD HERALD W  
20 Feb. 1891 - 16 May 1891 ceased

ELSTERNWICK NEWS W  
18 July 1914 - 12 Feb 1916 ceased

ELSTERNWICK NEWS W (second)  
14 Oct 1921 - 3 July 1924 ceased

ELSTERNWICK NEWS W (third)  
14 Sep. 1937 - 5 Oct 1937

ELSTERNWICK TIMES  
23 Dec. 1919 - 7 Jan. 1921

#### MURRUMBEENA

BUZZ W  
8 May 1931 - 21 Dec. 1933 ceased

## 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.