



# The Newsletter

Issue No. 271 | August 2025



Puckle Street, c 1924

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*Bob Chalmers & Kelsey Collins*

## A New Chapter for the Newsletter

Since 2010, Bob Chalmers, as our Newsletter Editor, has produced nearly 70 Newsletters, each received by our members with anticipation and interest. In collecting and sharing stories about our local history and reporting EHS events, Bob has driven the core function of the Society. More than this, as our local newspapers have gradually gone out of print, Bob recorded local happenings and changes in our suburbs, from the demolition of historic landmarks to the construction of the new ones. In the future, these Newsletters may, like the Essendon Gazette he has transformed into the Annals, be the sources that historians use to track the history that is currently happening. After 15 years in this role, Bob has resigned as Newsletter Editor, and EHS owes a debt of gratitude to Bob for his tireless and exemplary work.

Producing a newsletter is no small task; it requires a mix of skills in research, writing, organisation, design, and a good understanding of the stories and history that matter to our community. To continue this important tradition, the Committee has formed a Newsletter Sub-Committee, currently including Lyndall Byrne, David Sivaraj, and Kelsey Collins. We warmly invite members with an interest in design or community storytelling to get involved.

As this new format takes shape, we also welcome your constructive feedback. Your suggestions will help us ensure that the Newsletter remains a valuable way of sharing news, events, and local history with the whole Essendon Historical Society community.

*Lyndall, David & Kelsey*

# President's Report

It has been a busy year for the Essendon Historical Society, marked by outstanding exhibitions and major community events. Our first exhibition of the year, *Anything Goes: An Exhibition Inspired by the 1920s*, captured the style and spirit of the Roaring 20s in Moonee Valley. More recently, we opened *The Art of Needle & Thread*, featuring the beautiful embroidery of Lesley Uren. Both exhibitions have been very popular and are a credit to our unstoppable curator, Lyndall Byrne.

The Society has also hosted over 100 visitors for the Moonee Valley Festival in February, run two sold-out Heritage Walks of Aberfeldie in May, and once again welcomed visitors for Open House Melbourne in July.

Behind the scenes, important projects have been progressing. The Italian Community History Project has moved into its oral history phase, with questions developed, trialled, and two interviews completed to date. Sue Becker, Alexandra Burns, and I are leading this exciting work in recording community memories for future generations.



L-R: Cr Hamish Jones, Deputy Mayor Cr Fran Cosgriff, EHS President Cate Hutchings, Mayor Cr Ava Adams, EHS Committee Member Bob Chalmers and Cr Rose Iser (Photo: Hayden Williams)

In February, the Mayor and Councillors joined us for a preview of *Anything Goes* and an introduction to EHS activities. The Court House Sub-Committee has also met twice to consider building works and the licence; this remains an important and ongoing process.

In June, the members of the Committee met with Jo Briskey MP, the new Member for Maribyrnong and the first woman to hold the seat. Her office has kindly offered to print and post our newsletters.



Committee members Hayden Williams, Bob Chalmers, Cate Hutchings and Darryn Hartnett with Jo Briskey, MP (second from right)

Thank you to all our members who have already renewed your membership for 2025/26. There are still some outstanding renewals, and I would encourage members to renew as soon as possible. Members will soon receive information about our Annual Dinner to be held at Gannawarra on Tuesday, 28 October.

In the last week, we have held our AGM. I need to express our appreciation to Terry Scott for his many years of tireless service as Treasurer as well as for his ongoing support of Amanda during the transition period. Terry joined the EHS Committee in 2012 and took up the position of Treasurer in 2013. He has been an EHS Life Member since 2019 and spent many, many hours on the restoration process. We are very grateful for his contribution to EHS in various roles, and he has well earned his retirement from the EHS Committee.

I thank those continuing in their roles and warmly welcome Sue as the newest member of the Committee. With a strong team and enthusiastic community support, the year ahead promises to be just as exciting.



2024/25 Committee: Hayden Williams, Darryn Hartnett, Lyndall Byrne, Cate Hutchings, Bob Chalmers & Amanda Watson

# 2025 General Meetings

## 26 February - Members Show and Tell

This year's annual Show & Tell included a range of titbits, including highlights from our *Anything Goes* exhibition, exploring artefacts from the 1920s.

Additionally, Barry Blake shared a Moonee Valley Racing Club program from Saturday, 28 October 1961 Program which cost 2 shillings and where charges for admission were 15 shillings for gentlemen and 8 shillings for ladies.

Joy Spence, a descendant of the McCracken family, discussed her ancestors and other family members.

Cate Hutchings brought a King George IV whisky jug and discussed its previous owner, Margaret McSteen, who owned and operated Fitzroy's Perseverance Hotel.

**25 March - Lance Pritchard: Hume & Hovell Expedition**  
 Lance presented his research into the 1824 journey of Hume & Hovell. The general consensus holds that the expedition reached Corio Bay, but Lance posits that they in fact reached the Werribee River.

As part of Lance's presentation including maps, there was evidence that the Yarra Yarra River was named the 'River Yar' by Hovell. Hovell also named the Maribyrnong River as 'Arndell Stream,' but the settlers called it the 'Salt Water River'. However, the settlers called the Werribee River, the 'Ex Stream' at the time. He claims that Hume & Hovell passed through Avondale Heights and crossed the Maribyrnong just south of Solomon's Ford.

Lance donated copies of each of his books, *Hume & Hovell Expedition Termination* and *The Memoirs of Jim Dugmore 1836-1903*, to the EHS.

**22 April - Tine and Duncan Rolley: Artifact Conservation**  
 Paper and book conservators based in Kyneton, the Rolleys have conserved 40,000 pieces over 33 years. Their presentation explored issues with various photography technology, paper, binding, glues, water, and insect damage, and more and shared some of the incredible projects that they have worked on over time.

## 27 May - Margaret Anderson: Odd Jobs of the Past

Margaret explored the many occupations that have disappeared. For some of these, even the names have been almost forgotten, such as typing pools, nightmen, scoop boys, Inspectors of Nuisances, leech merchants, rabbiters, wet nurses, hangmen, and phrenologists.

## 24 June - Nina Fromhold: Memory Lane Life Stories

Nina explained how important a recording can be as someone's voice is unique and shared some interviewing techniques that aid documenting of history and family histories. Nina advised beginning with a clear scope for discussion, finding a quiet place, and introducing the speaker with a few facts to spark the discussion. She also advocated for great questions which lead to great stories, and to spend time in the details, allowing long stories of triumphs, delights, and heartache as they are what define us. Finally, she explained the usefulness of phones to record and save as mp3 and wav files.

## July 22 - The Launch of *The Art of Needle & Thread*

At our July Meeting, we launched our new exhibition, *The Art of Needle & Thread*. Curated by Lyndall Byrne, this exhibition centres on needlework, showcasing the work of Lesley Uren, who came and shared the story of her lifelong career as an embroidery artist.



Lesley Uren & Lyndall Byrne with two of Lesley's characteristic pieces at the Launch of The Art of Needle & Thread  
 (Photo: Hayden Williams)

A founding member of the Embroiders Guild, Victoria and instrumental in the development of metal threadwork within Australia, Lesley combines this traditional technique with creative beading and machine embroidery. Lesley's phenomenally creative and intricate work can be seen at the Courthouse until December.

# Anything Goes: An Exhibition Inspired by the 1920s

The first display for 2025 was titled *Anything Goes: An Exhibition Inspired by the 1920s*.



(Photo: Lyndall Byrne)

Centred on family life in the 1920s, the exhibition featured many objects from our collection relating to that era. It opened with two beautiful wedding dresses displayed in the entrance foyer. In the Courtroom, visitors could view household objects, ladies' and men's dressing accessories, formal wear from the 1920s, as well as a selection of tools and carnival glass items.



(Photo: Lyndall Byrne)

The exhibition was warmly received by members and visitors to the Museum, with many recalling similar items from their own family histories. It ran from February to June 2025.

# The Art of Needle & Thread

Our current exhibition at the Courthouse is titled *The Art of Needle & Thread*, showcasing the extraordinary work of Lesley Uren, OAM. Lesley has devoted a lifetime to embroidery, textile arts, and metal thread work. She is one of the founding members of the Embroidery Guild Victoria and played a key role in developing metal thread work in Australia. While we are only able to display a small section of Lesley's incredible pieces, what is on show is truly stunning.



(Photo: Lyndall Byrne)

One piece in particular depicts Bundoora Homestead, one of Melbourne's historic homes, located on Snake Gully Road, Bundoora. This large embroidery is crafted entirely in metal thread, using a wide variety of traditional threads and techniques. When sunlight hits the piece, it sparkles beautifully.



(Photo: Lyndall Byrne)

Lesley's work can be seen at the Moonee Ponds Court House Museum until the end of this year.

# Sundays at the Court House

In the past twelve months, the Moonee Ponds Court House Museum was open for 49 Sundays. With our popular exhibitions, like *Our Sporting Legacy*, *Anything Goes*, and *The Art of Needle & Thread*, we are increasingly attracting higher numbers of visitors. Indeed, in 2024/25, we welcomed 854 visitors through our doors.

With these increasing numbers, we are so incredibly grateful to our Sunday volunteers who open the Museum each week. Thank you to these volunteers - *Bob Chalmers, Alex Bragiola, Bob Mackay, Lyndall Byrne, Marilyn Kenny, Cate Hutchings, Sue Leigh, Sharyn Sully, Terry & Julie Scott, Shirley Griffiths, Sue Becker, and Alexandra Burns.*

With these wonderful volunteers, we would not be able to open our doors each weekend.

To keep building on this momentum, we, in the words of Lord Kitchener, need you! We need smiling faces to welcome visitors into the Museum. You will always be rostered alongside experienced volunteers ready to share their knowledge and guidance - and to take any trickier questions!



As a member of a historical society, there is a good chance that you love history; spending a Sunday afternoon at the Museum is a wonderful way to get a behind-the-scenes glimpse of our exhibitions while connecting with people who share your interest in history over a good cup of tea with a biscuit.

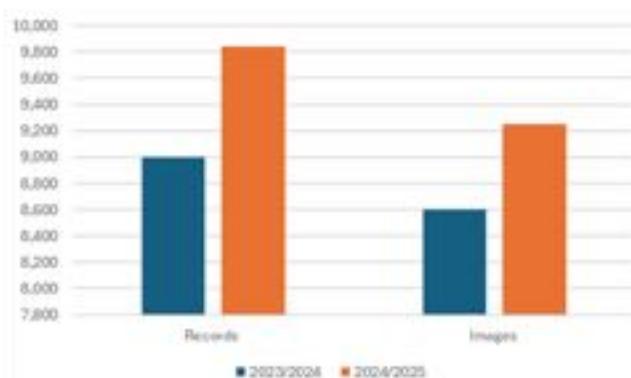
Just three hours on just one Sunday a month is a small commitment with a big impact, and the more of us who share the load, the lighter it becomes.

If you'd like to be part of this welcoming team, we'd be delighted to hear from you. Look out for an email with a link to volunteer each month, or email [EHS@esshisoc.org.au](mailto:EHS@esshisoc.org.au)

# Cataloguing Sub-Committee

Thank you to Anna Denham, Anne Hillier, Anna Maree Malmgren, Rod McLennan, Stephanie Tamburrino, and Bob Chalmers for their work each Monday morning. The task is essential for EHS and our collection. Anna Maree and Stephanie have been going through the filing cabinets in the Sam Merrifield Room, reviewing their contents to add them to the catalogue on eHive with a description of each file.

Communication, clarity, and consistency across all EHS users is important, and Anna, Anne Maree, Anne and Rod have been developing a one-page document 'eHive Cataloguing User Basic Guidelines' and have also been updating the Cataloguing Standards. Anna and Lyndall have simplified room location names in the eHive 'location' pick list.



Anna Maree also reviews the relevancy of items in the EHS Collection to ensure all items conform with the Collection Management Policy and fit within the capacity of our limited space at the Court House.

Alex Bragiola and Lyndall Byrne have assisted with the cataloguing of house photos, house plans, costumes, and framed photos and plans. Alex and Bob have purchased a Plustext scanner for slides, negatives & microfilm to allow for further in-house digitisation



# Court House

## Maintenance Update

The Court House has long struggled with damp. A photo from the 1970s shows damage from damp on the north wall, so the issue predates EHS's occupation. The external north wall was substantially repointed in 2019 as part of the fire rectification works, but moisture remainder a problem, and it was not long before the repointing began to fall out.

There is not a single cause for our wall dampness. There have been two major inundations in 2017 and 2022 from a burst water main to the police station. This water makes its way to the site's low point at Kellaway Avenue. In addition, Terry Scott had rainwater pipes checked and, where PTV put the bus stop and blocked a storm water outlet, had a diversion implemented. We even installed spouting for the shed.

The MVCC heritage adviser has suggested that the gutters may be too small, and the kitchen hot water service has also been discharging a lot of water into the north wall.



We had discussed starting repair or delaying pending funding when, under the Kitchen, we discovered bricks failing with a brick column that holds up the kitchen floor very close to collapse. This meant delay could not be justified. Later on, the ceiling in the South Vestibule was found to be close to collapse as well.

Investigation under the kitchen and under the north

garden suggests the hot water service was a major dampness contributor.

EHS engaged Trudy Rickard, Architect & Heritage Consultant, in November 2024 to assist with the various technologies available and to project manage other contractors. We received a grant of \$54,755 (excluding GST) from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, to part fund the works. SIDA Constructions Pty Ltd commenced work in May 2025.



The following works were carried out:

- Brick column repaired
- Hot service and split system runoffs were diverted to storm water
- Sections of the north wall & west veranda wall repointed.
- Some bricks & bluestone segments replaced
- Area under the Kitchen cleaned of debris, some wood shavings as old as the Court House
- Holes in the sub-walls widened to improve access
- South Vestibule internal east wall and ceiling replastered and painted
- North garden altered to improve drainage



# Essendon Gazette on Trove

In 2023, the Essendon Historical Society, with the support of the John Williams Bequest, Moonee Valley Libraries, and the English Speaking Union, spearheaded a project to have our local papers, including *The Essendon & Flemington Gazette* (1882-1894) and *The Essendon Gazette* (1888-1913), digitised on *Trove*.

In May this year, the next stage of this project was completed with the digitisation of *The Essendon Gazette* from 1 January, 1919 to 25 June, 1931. Until 2 October, 1924, the publication was titled *The Essendon Gazette and Keilor, Bulla & Broadmeadows Reporter* before, from 9 October, 1924, it was renamed *The Essendon Gazette and Flemington Spectator, Keilor, Bulla & Broadmeadows Reporter*.

Supplemented by the existing WWI digitisation, this latest stage means that our local newspapers, spanning nearly half a century from 1882 until 1931, are online and freely accessible to all.

EHS is very grateful to the City of Moonee Valley for a Community Grant of \$6,000. Other funding was provided by EHS (\$3,742). EHS was assisted by the State Library of Victoria for loan of the microfilm masters and Moonee Valley Libraries, whose support led to a cost 'discount', and the National Library of Australia.



*The EHS Trove project team, Hayden Williams & Bob Chalmers  
(Photo: MVCC)*

## CHURCH OF ENGLAND GIRLS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

LOWTHER HALL, LESLIE RD., ESSENDON  
Telephone: Ascot 400.

### BOARDING AND DAY SCHOOL

Pupils prepared for Intermediate and Leaving Examinations.

Ample accommodation for boarders, including spacious sleeping-out balconies.

Lofty and airy Class Rooms, with modern equipment, tennis court and sports ground.

The Kindergarten Department will be under the charge of a fully qualified and experienced Kindergarten Mistress.

First Term commences Wednesday, 11th February, 1920.

The Head Mistress at home to parents 2 to 5 on and after February, 3rd.

Head Mistress: Miss Florence M. Hutton, B.Sc.

Prospectus at Diocesan Registry, Cathedral Buildings.

*Advertising for the newly-opened Lowther Hall Church of England Girls' Grammar School (Source: The Essendon Gazette and Keilor, Bulla & Broadmeadows Reporter, 4 March, 1920)*

**E**SSENDON Aerodrome yesterday afternoon was the setting of another great event in the history of aviation, when Kingsford Smith and C. P. Ulm, the Australian airmen who blazed the trail of the skies across the Pacific from the United States to their own proud country, landed with their two intrepid American colleagues—Lyon, super-navigator, and Warner, wizard of the radio. The arrival was witnessed by an enormous crowd, and the scene was one of unparalleled enthusiasm.

*A brief report on the visit of the iconic Southern Cross, aviation legend, Charles Kingsford Smith, the fellow Australian C. P. Ulm, who, with American airmen Harry Lyon and Jim Warner, blazed the trail across the Pacific Ocean from the United States of America to Australia. (Source: The Essendon Gazette and Flemington Spectator, Keilor, Bulla & Broadmeadows Reporter, 14 June, 1928)*

Explore these newspapers at  
[bit.ly/Essendon1920sOnTrove](https://bit.ly/Essendon1920sOnTrove)  
or by scanning the QR code:



# Heritage Walks in Aberfeldie

As part of the National Trust Heritage Festival, the Essendon Historical Society hosted two sold-out heritage walks on May 4 and May 18. Led by Kelsey Collins, more than 50 walkers - and one dog - explored the braes of Aberfeldie.



(Photo: Jenny Macaffer)

The walk began at the crest of Aberfeldie Park, where walkers learnt about the origins of this corner of the district in James Robertson's *Aberfeldie* and the 1888 subdivision of the estate. It then continued past the grand homes of Aberfeldie Street, including *Weirton* (featured later in this Newsletter), *Tooronga*, *Homewood*, and *Fashoda*. With a welcome pause for coffee at *North & Eight*, walkers heard of the fascinating story of Detective Sydney McGuffie, the curious origins of St Kinnord Street, and the important work of the Aberfeldie Baby Health Centre. The walk concluded at *Clydebank* - once the residence of the prominent Ramsay family and now the centre of *Ave Maria College*.



Join our next walk of Moonee Ponds at [bit.ly/GrandOldMooneePonds](https://bit.ly/GrandOldMooneePonds) or by scanning the QR code:



# Open House Melbourne 2025

The Essendon Historical Society opened the doors of the Moonee Ponds Court House Museum again this year for Open House Melbourne. Despite the steady rain, the Court House opened on Sunday, 27 July, for extended hours from 10am to 5pm, drawing in 129 visitors to appreciate the architecture of the Courtroom. Unlike most Sundays, visitors could step behind the scenes of the backrooms, where they could see the less-visible work of a historical society, from cataloguing to exhibition preparation.

The highlight of the day was the launch of our new exhibition, *The Art of Needle & Thread*, showcasing the intricate embroidery of Lesley Uren. Young visitors (and even some older) even went on a scavenger hunt to spot the many embroidered animals featured in the works of art around the exhibition.

Led by Bob Chalmers despite the threateningly grey clouds, seventeen walkers also explored the history of Queens Park, learning about the early origins of the ponds, the gold rush and Burke & Wills encampments, as well as the ornamental lakes, gardens, and memorials reflecting more than 150 years of local history.



Visitors enjoying the Heritage Walk of Queens Park, led by Bob Chalmers  
(Photo: Cate Hutchings)

Thanks go to our dedicated volunteers - Kelsey, Lyndall, Alexandra, Cate, Terry, Julie, and Shirley - whose efforts ensured the day's success.

# Essendon Church of Christ: 110 Years

Although it may be one of the smallest and least known Christian denominations in Australia, the Churches of Christ have a strong local heritage. This year, the Essendon Church of Christ celebrates a special milestone, with its 110th anniversary. The first Sunday services began on March 7, 1915, in the newly constructed Essendon Public Hall in Russell Street. The Church continued to meet in the Public Hall until the Spanish Flu forced its closure during the summer of 1918/19.

This year also marks several other significant anniversaries in the Church's history, including the 100th anniversary of the red-brick chapel at 52 Buckey Street; the 20th anniversary of Arcadia Aged Care at 75 Keilor Road (built by Churches of Christ); and the 10th anniversary of weekly Sunday services in the Arcadia chapel.



*Laying of Foundation Stone (April 18, 1925)*

Over the past 110 years, the Essendon Church of Christ has experienced many highs and lows. There have been times of tremendous growth and expansion, including the planting of new churches at North Essendon (Berry Street) and Strathmore (Loch Crescent). There have also been times of great challenges, especially during the Second World War.

One fascinating little chapter in the Church's history dates back to 1930. This was a time of great ambition and enthusiasm in the Church, however, there was one

peculiar problem that emerged. On Sunday mornings, a local ice-cream vendor would bring his horse and cart down the laneway next to the church, while ringing his bell for all to hear. As the Board of Officers examined how best to address the situation, the following minute was recorded at a Special Members Meeting on December 17th, 1930:

*It was decided that if the ice cream vendor persisted in calling attention to the fact that ice cream could only be sold by loudly ringing his bell, that he be asked to desist from ringing it in front of the Church, as he could expect little hope of gain there, and if he was still of the opinion that an itinerant purveyor of that delectable commodity ice cream, has a legal right to disturb the peace and serenity of the Sabbath by that unwelcome tintinnabulation (his own opinion of its mellifluence notwithstanding), that his attention be directed to the fact his gracious Majesty Charles I, of well beloved memory, has enacted (in his wisdom) for the lasting benefit of his loyal subjects in perpetuity, that the sanctity of the seventh day may not be disturbed, even under so great a provocation as to confer a minor benefit on mankind by giving them an opportunity to purchase such a toothsome succulent delicacy as ice cream, at least during such times as the hours of Church worship.*



*The Congregation (1946)*

Throughout its rich history, the Essendon Church of Christ has undergone many changes, and this year will be a time of celebration, as the Church looks back on its 110-year history and the role it has played in the local community.

*By Timothy Ratcliffe, minister of Essendon Church of Christ since March 2019.*

# Weirton

The story of the beautiful Italianate house at 12 Aberfeldie Street starts with the Bloomfield brothers. William and his brothers, Thomas and Samuel, were all prominent businessmen in their own right. In 1887, they formed a partnership – Bloomfield Bros, winning the contract to build railway lines, including Hamilton to Coleraine, Terang to Warrnambool, and Terang to Mortlake. Around the same time, three brothers built a towered, twelve-room brick mansion in Ascot Vale, which they named *Rothwell* – after their mother's maiden name. The families' names were ultimately bestowed on Bloomfield Road and Rothwell Street in Ascot Vale, at the intersection where their grand home once stood. In 1890, William married Catherine Graham Weir, and their first two sons, John Rothwell and William McCracken, were both born at Rothwell in 1891 and 1893, respectively.



*Weirton in 2025*

In 1896, William, Catherine, and the boys moved to Aberfeldie Street, having just built their own home and named it *Weirton* for Catherine's maiden name – Weir. Here, their first daughter, Janet Rothwell, was born in 1897. Despite building *Weirton*, the Bloomfields only lived there for about a year. William and Catherine would ultimately retire to Pakenham, where their property was named *Weirdale*, continuing the family tradition of naming their properties for their maternal family names. In the meantime, they leased their Aberfeldie Street home to a series of tenants.

Between 1902 and 1906, *Weirton* was the home of Frank Leon Outtrim and his second wife, Frances

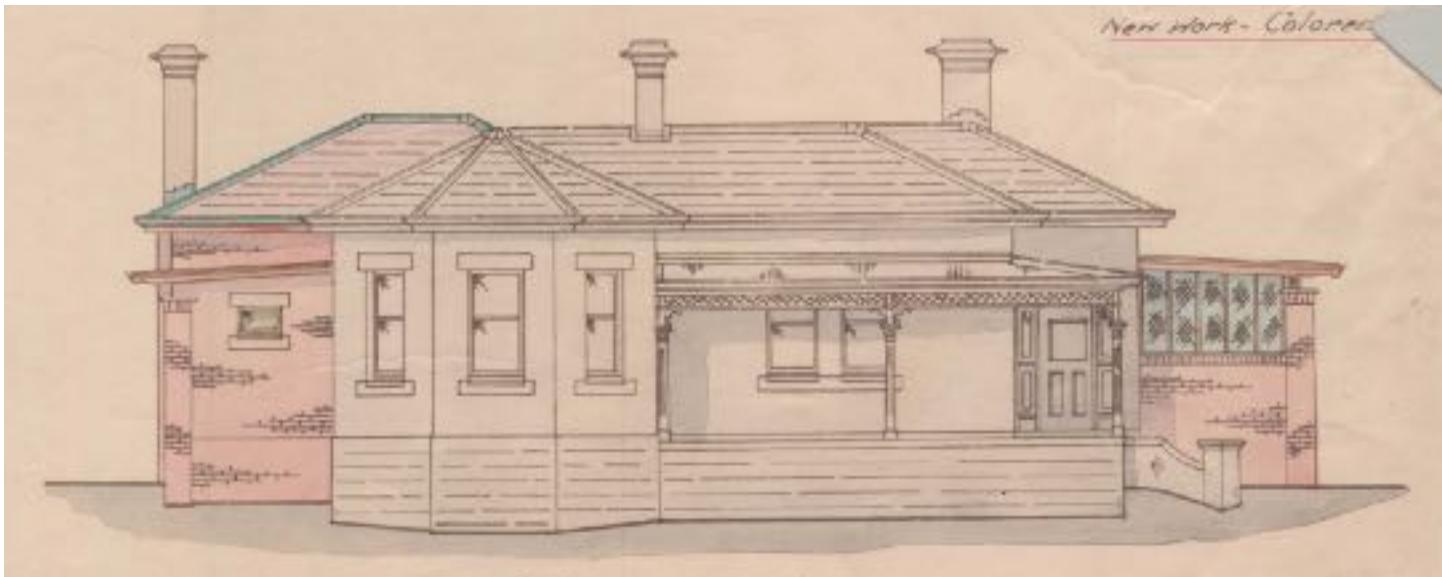
Caroline (née Litchfield), and his son, Cecil. The brother of MLA, Alfred Outtrim, Frank began his career as a letter-carrier at the age of 15 and then joined the Victorian Postmaster-General's Department after passing the Civil Service examination in 1863 and worked his way through the ranks of telegraph-operator, postmaster and inspector. In 1895, he became deputy commissioner of taxes in the Treasury but returned to serve as deputy postmaster-general for Victoria in 1897. In 1907, Frank retired from his role as Deputy Postmaster-General and, with his family, set off for England. His son, Cecil, was a talented tenor who studied in Paris and, in 1909, was engaged by Oscar Hammerstein at the Philadelphia Opera House – the beginning a musical career which would see him take to iconic stages across Melbourne.

In 1911, the house was leased by Edwin Sydney Wragge, who lived in the home with his wife, Grace, and their two children, Mollie and Kenneth. Edwin was the son of the Heidelberg pioneering family, while Grace was the daughter of Daniel Wilson, a pioneer who immigrated to Australia amidst the Gold Rush and ultimately settled in Essendon, where he would become a prominent citizen, businessman, and JP. Edwin and Grace's youngest daughter, Betty, would be born in 1912 while the family lived at *Weirton*. The Wragges departed in 1914, relocating to *Woodlands* in Leslie Road, Essendon.

*Weirton* then became home to the widowed Matilda Sutherland (née Magennis) and her children, Percival, and daughters, Lilian and Jean. During the war years, Matilda's younger son, Donald, served as a driver on the Western Front. In 1921, Percival married, and the following year, Matilda moved with her son to his new home in McCarron Parade, Essendon.

It was then that John Morgan English, a local businessman, took over the lease, moving in with his wife, Minna (née Fiedler), their son, Henry, and their daughters, Alice, Meize, and Margaret. The girls attended Lowther Hall, which could be seen from their front verandah.

In 1925, *Weirton* was advertised for sale in *The Argus* 'That handsome and beautifully situated brick villa residence' at the 'corner [of] Aberfeldie and Alma Streets' was described as



having a 'tiled return verandah and porch entrance,' nine rooms, 'bathroom, pantry' and, in the grounds, 'two-storied brick out offices, washhouse, man's room, garage, loose box, loft. . . all nicely laid out in choice garden, lawn, drive &c. with imposing entrance gates' (*The Argus*, 14 November, 1925 – p3). The Englishes purchased both the home and three adjoining blocks.

By the 1930s, *Weirton* had become into a lively social hub as Minna and her daughters hosting gatherings that made both the home and the ladies of the house well-known in the area.



Miss Alice English, pictured in the society pages (*Herald* - 6 October, 1938)

In 1936, plans were drawn up to extend the house, creating a new dining room for entertainment, adding bathrooms and service areas at the rear, and four sleepouts along the north wall. Four years later, however, English commissioned Melbourne architect William Henry Merritt to convert the grand home into two, creating flats, each with its own kitchen, living room, and bedrooms. English also appointed Merritt to

design the four flats at 10A Aberfeldie Street, on the corner with Alma Street, notable for the connecting garage, reflecting the growth of the motor car in the 1930s.

At the same time, Merritt was also designed the brick Art Deco home at 14A Aberfeldie Street for H. J. Green.



14A Aberfeldie Street

Known for his apartment blocks, during the 1930s, Merritt's style evolved into Streamline Moderne and Art Deco Functionalist, reflected in his Aberfeldie designs. These projects were among his last before enlisting in the RAAF during the Second World War.

These developments were a part of Aberfeldie Street's shift from a concentration of grand homes to a residential street. Merritt's two Art Deco designs – the flats at 10A and the home at 14A – still stand intact, while *Weirton* has since been restored as a single-family home at 12 Aberfeldie Street, and, from the front steps today, the mansion of Lowther Hall can still be glimpsed between two 1930s homes opposite.

*This article is an extract from the Aberfeldie Heritage Walk by Kelsey Collins.*

# The Rise & Fall of the Kensington Glue Works

*This article is based on GJM Heritage report for the Rail Network Alliance, 20 February 2025 and is re-printed here with permission.*

The Former Glue Works at Kensington played an integral role in the manufacture of glue, gelatine, and their associated by-products in Australia.

Melbourne City relocated its cattle market to Newmarket in 1860 and established abattoirs at Smithfield Road in Kensington in 1861. These decisions led to the establishment of factories using animal by-products as feedstock.

Kensington Glue Works at 1-39 Hobsons Road, Kensington commenced in the late nineteenth century on the banks of the Maribyrnong River. It operated in a limited capacity on the north west part of the site. This was acquired and expanded by Davis Gelatine Pty Ltd.

Davis Gelatine had its origins in New Zealand and opened a factory in Botany, NSW. The company then applied to establish a large factory in Kensington in 1927 but met with considerable opposition on health grounds. The progress associations of Ascot Vale, Essendon and Kensington, the Victoria Racing Club, and ratepayers in the vicinity opposed the proposal.

After a lengthy controversy, permission for the construction of a glue works was eventually granted. In 1929, the company opened its factory in Kensington for the production of glue and gelatine, and the by-products of oil, tallow, stock foods and fertiliser.

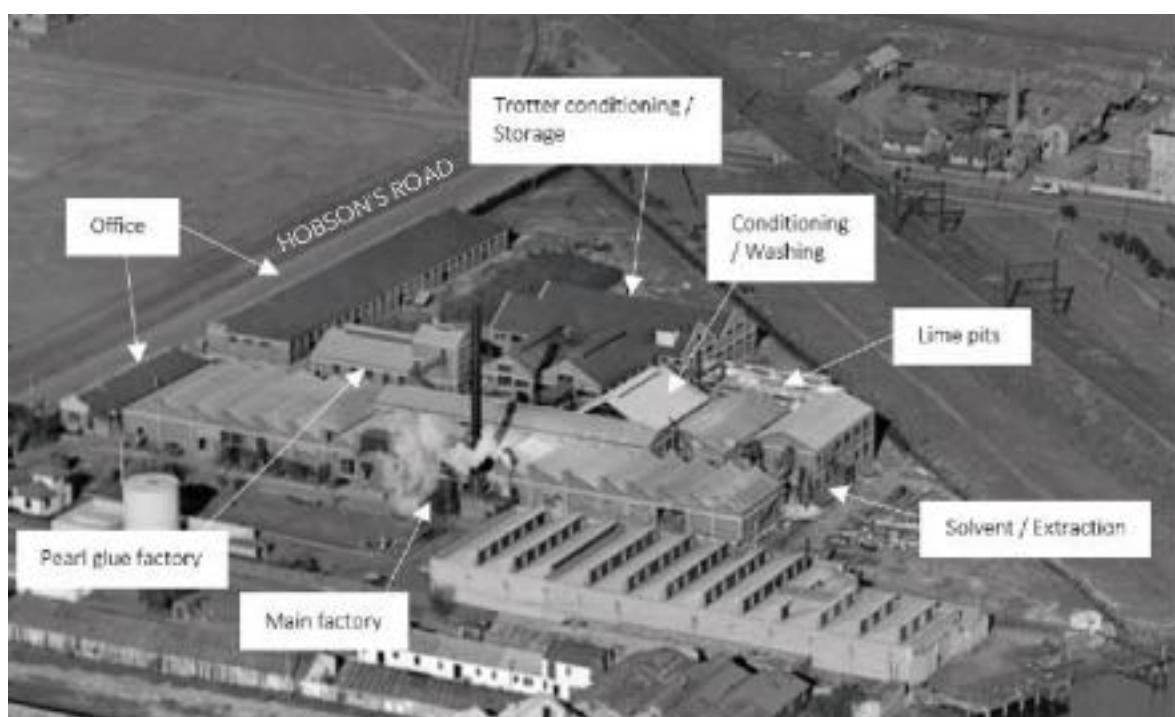
By 1930, the main factory building was largely complete and was described as 'one of the largest factories of the kind in the world'.

Further structures were added to the Kensington site in the 1930s and 1940s. The Kensington factory buildings, constructed from the late 1920s to the early 1940s, were designed by well-known Melbourne architect and town planner, Frank Stapley (1858-1944).

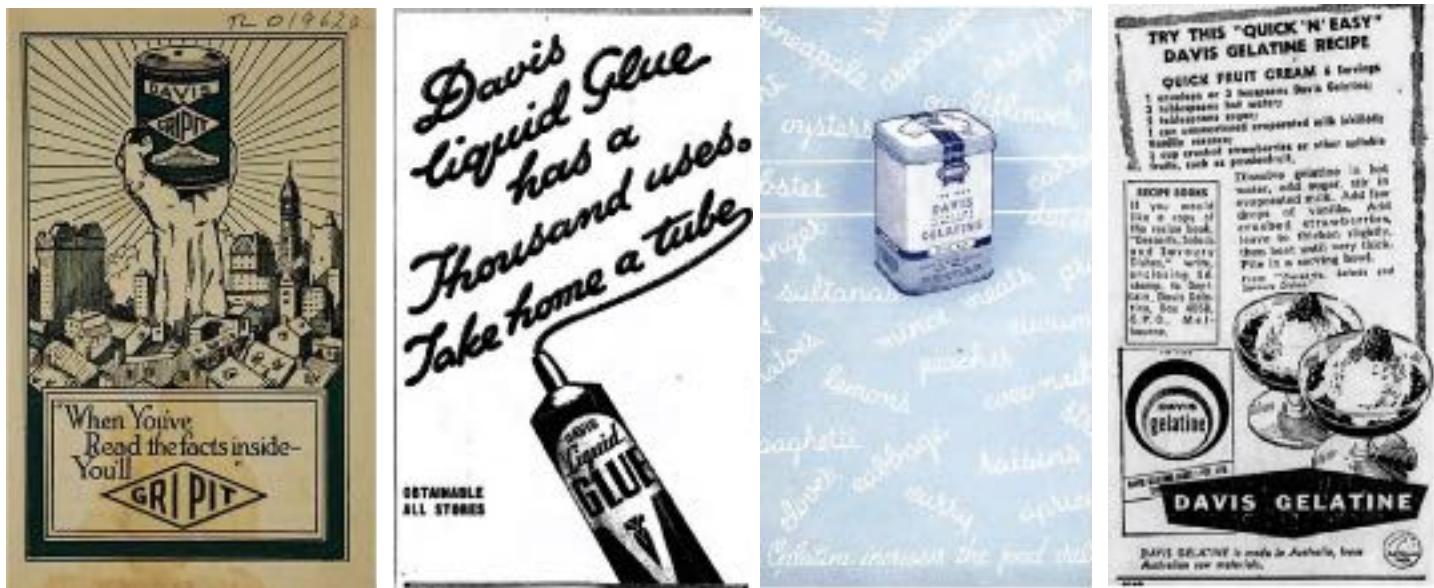
## *The Products*

The gelatine and glue industry has been built upon the utilisation of by-products which otherwise are of little or no value. Until the establishment of Davis Gelatine in Australia in 1919, Australia was completely dependent upon importing supplies from other countries. The enterprise was so successful that it was lauded in various newspapers as a 'national asset' and was a major exporter.

Glue was the key product manufactured by Davis Gelatine at the factory in Kensington. Animal glue, an adhesive created through the prolonged boiling of animal connective tissue, was manufactured as 'Gripit', and 'Davis Cold Liquid Glue', as well as dry glue in powder or pearl form.



*Former Kensington Glue Works, c. 1940  
(Source: State Library of Victoria)*



Advertisements for Davis Gelatine glue products

(Source: Museum Victoria; Smith's Weekly, 4 September 1948; and Age, 20 February 1962)

Advertisements detailed how Davis glue 'offers the solution of every gluing problem in industries which cover woodwork of all descriptions, veneers, cardboard boxes, matches, boots and shoes, leather goods, refining metals, abrasive papers and cloths, cold water paints, textiles and fabrics.'

By-products produced at Kensington included tallow – animal fat used in producing soap and candles, burned in oil lanterns and torches, and used as cooking oil – as well as fertiliser and stock foods.

The company's other primary product was gelatine, a colourless, tasteless, and odourless ingredient, commonly derived from collagen taken from animal parts. Gelatine has a wide range of applications: it is a basic material in the manufacture of jelly crystals, confectionary, canned foods, ice cream and other food stuffs; in pharmacy, it is used for making capsules, surgical dressings, tooth pastes, pill coatings, and various emulsions and ointments; and in industrial and textile manufacturing it is used for photographic film, printers' rollers, straw hats, textiles, plaster-cast moulds, artificial flowers, and for glazing and stiffening paper and fabrics.

#### Final Years & Closure (1960s-1990s)

The glue works continued to operate into the late twentieth century. It was eventually closed (closure date not determined) and the former glue works was refurbished by a developer and leased to several smaller factories in the late 1990s.

#### The Site in the 2000s

The former Kensington Glue Works buildings remained largely unoccupied through the early 2000s and fell into disrepair. A fire destroyed several of the central buildings on the site in 2007. By 2009, the central buildings had been demolished. The 1936 office building was briefly occupied as part of the Metro Tunnel Project, and a tie station was constructed on the southern boundary of the former glue works site, adjacent to the railway line, to support the operation of the new Metro Tunnel rail network.

With the exception of the administration buildings fronting Hobsons Road, the remaining buildings were demolished in 2025.

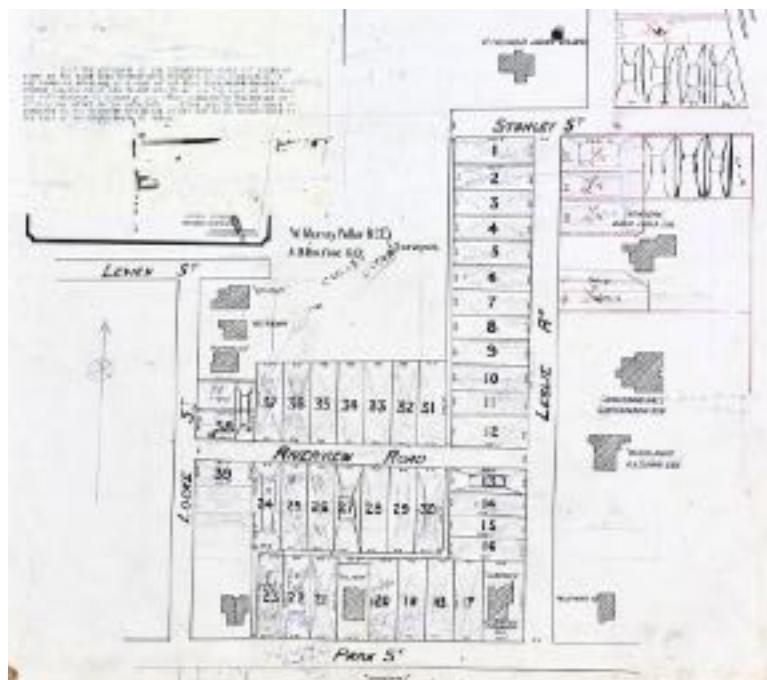
If you have enjoyed the articles in this Newsletter, please consider sharing your own research or recollections in an article, or joining our new Newsletter Sub-Committee

## STREET CORNER

# Leslie Road

Connecting Buckley Street and Park Street, Leslie Road was created by David Elder's Riverview Estate, but was originally known as Leslie Street. Like Stanley Street, it is named in honour of one of David Elder's son, Leslie Douglas Elder. David Elder and his family lived in *Remuera*. This grand home was demolished in the

Join us in exploring the history of Leslie Road with the Grand, Old Moonee Ponds Heritage Walk in October: [bit.ly/GrandOldMooneePonds](http://bit.ly/GrandOldMooneePonds)



Plan of the Riverview Estate, 1901 (Source: EHS Collection)

# From Memory Lane Garden

The Memory Lane Garden is located at the front of the Moonee Ponds Courthouse Museum, featuring engraved tiles laid into the landscaped garden. Each tile commemorates the life of a person who lived or worked in the Moonee Valley district and so left a mark on our community and history, like Joan Kirner.



All funds raised go towards the maintenance of the historic Moonee Ponds Court House Museum. If you are interested in a tile to remember some special to you, please email *EHS@esshisssoc.org.au*

# Joan Kirner

Joan Kirner (nee Hood) grew up in Essendon. She attended Aberfeldie Primary School, then Penleigh and Melbourne University. She became a teacher at Ballarat Girls Technical School where she met and married her husband, Ron. They moved to Williamstown and had three children. Joan was very active in School Parents Clubs working tirelessly to improve education in Victoria. Subsequently, she entered State Parliament in 1982, taking on numerous ministerial roles before becoming the 42nd Premier of Victoria in 1990 - the first woman to hold this post. She was a passionate supporter of Essendon Football Club and was awarded the 2001 Centenary Medal. She was awarded Companion of the Order of Australia (AC) in 2012 for eminent service to Parliament and the community.

A black and white portrait of Joan Kirner, an elderly woman with short, dark hair, wearing a patterned shawl. She is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a gentle expression.

*Joan Kirner AC*  
(Photo: Wikimedia Commons)



# Upcoming Events

The Society meets February to November at the Moonee Ponds Court House Museum (770 Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds) on the fourth Tuesday of the month unless otherwise notified.



Saturday, 13 September | *Prahran Mechanics' Institute Victorian History Showcase*  
PMI Victorian History Library Inc.  
39 St. Edmonds Road, Prahran



Tuesday, 23 September | General Meeting  
*Madonna Grehan*  
*Visitations by God to Nosologies: Accounting for Maternal Deaths in Victoria, 1850-1870*



Sunday, 19 October | Heritage Walk  
*Grand, Old Moonee Ponds*  
Order your tickets at [bit.ly/GrandOldMooneePonds](http://bit.ly/GrandOldMooneePonds)



Tuesday, 28 October | Annual Dinner  
*Richard Broome*  
*The Story of Melbourne's Lanes: Essential but Unplanned*  
Order your tickets at [bit.ly/EHSAannualDinner25](http://bit.ly/EHSAannualDinner25)



Tuesday, 25 November | General Meeting  
*Bob Chalmers*  
*Aberfeldie Primary School*

## New Members

It is a great pleasure to be able to welcome the following members who have joined the Essendon Historical Society in recent months:

*Susan Baxter (Avondale Heights)*  
*Suzane Becker (Ascot Vale)*  
*Russell Byard (Kensington)*  
*Assoc. Prof. Arun Chandu (Moonee Ponds)*  
*Patricia Culliver (Moonee Ponds)*  
*Cr Hamish Jones (Strathmore)*  
*Lisa and Roderick Laidlaw (Flemington)*  
*Warren Lang (Narrawea, NSW)*  
*David Mac (Essendon)*  
*Andrina Otteraa (Ascot Vale)*  
*James Pennell (Ascot Vale)*  
*Madeleine Piscopo (Ascot Vale)*  
*Meriti Ryan (Moonee Ponds)*  
*Anne-Maree Sawyer (Moonee Ponds)*  
*Joy Spence (Coolum Beach Qld)*  
*Stephanie Tamburino (Strathmore)*  
*Kathleen Toal (Briar Hill)*  
*John Watson (Ascot Vale)*

We hope that you all enjoy your membership of the EHS and look forward to meeting up with you at our General Meetings or other activities in the future.

## Committee of Management 2025-2026

*President: Cate Hutchings*  
*Vice President: Kelsey Collins*  
*Secretary: Hayden Williams*  
*Treasurer: Amanda Watson*  
*Committee Members:*  
*Suzane Becker*  
*Lyndall Byrne*  
*Bob Chalmers*  
*Darryn Hartnett*  
*Bob Mackay*

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