

Greensborough Historical Society Inc.

# Newsletter

**Edition 32, December 2018**

Incorporation No. **A0054430X**  
ABN **64 318 435 402**



## **President's Report**

Well what a year of activity for Greensborough Historical Society with long- and short-term projects completed and some surprises along the way. Our membership is growing and I welcome all new members who I hope will enjoy the camaraderie and activities we participate in.

Getting air conditioning/heating in our History Resource Centre with help from the Federal Government was great and then much to our surprise being advised the kitchen was due for refurbishment under Banyule City Council's maintenance program was an added bonus.

The kitchen works included replacement of all existing cupboards, shelving, sink and laying of a new floor surface as well as providing hot water to the sink adjacent to the toilets. All looked like it was going to plan however due to a plumbing issue half of the building was flooded causing water damage to our stock of books, 48 of "As I Recall" and 150 of "Do You Recall".

Fortunately, Sue Ballantyne was there the following day and was able to turn the water off, receiving a drenching in the process however the damage was done by then but could have been worse had she not popped in to pick something up as the builder was not due to return for another two days.

So just when us Thursdayites thought we had knocking off for the festive season we have a few things to clean up and sort out.

Now of course it is that time of year when everyone is in full flight getting ready for Christmas and then suddenly it has gone and its over for another year. Well having four weeks overseas was a bit like that, the excitement building up to the day of leaving, the travelling and then the many eye-opening places we visited that have been around for 1000s of years with buildings still standing in their magnificence, and then it's back home and yes it's great to be back home.

What was very apparent is how Australia's early history is a result of its isolation from even its immediate neighbours and created a totally unique culture quite alien to European history and yet we know very little about it. Whether we can rectify that to any degree is questionable but Peter Van Eeken is doing his utmost to include some in our next publication which we will be working on over the next year or so.

On behalf of myself and your Committee I wish everyone of you a safe and enjoyable festive season and look forward to catching up in 2019.

Noel

## Committee 2018-2019

**President** Noel Withers 94354513

**Vice President** Peter Van Eeken  
pve101@yahoo.com.au

**Secretary** Norm Colvin 94352903

**Treasurer** John Gibson 94350097

### Committee Members

Sue Brenkovich

Anne Paul

Marilyn Smith

Sue Ballantyne

## Contact the Greensborough Historical Society

Web Site: [www.greensboroughhistorical.org.au](http://www.greensboroughhistorical.org.au)

Email: [info@greensboroughhistorical.org.au](mailto:info@greensboroughhistorical.org.au)

By Post: Greensborough Historical Society Inc.  
4 Jenna Close, Greensborough 3088.

In Person: **Resource Centre**  
34 Glenauburn Road (off Para Road), Lower Plenty  
Open Thursdays from 10.00am to 3.00pm  
Visitors welcome

## Meeting dates and times for 2019

*New members and visitors are most welcome to join us at our meetings.*

Committee meetings are generally held at 7.00pm on the third Wednesday of each month. Venue: Resource Centre.

The Resource Centre will be open on selected weekends for research into your family or the local area. All welcome!

Social Morning Teas are held at 10am on the second Tuesday of "even" months starting in February. All welcome - bring a friend to meet some of the GHS members. Venues advised on the GHS website [www.greensboroughhistorical.org.au](http://www.greensboroughhistorical.org.au).

## Dates for 2019 are attached to this Newsletter

Do you have an idea for a story or photos to include in our Newsletter? Contact the Editor, Sue Ballantyne [sueballantyne2010@hotmail.com](mailto:sueballantyne2010@hotmail.com)

**For the past few years, the “Hurstbridge Line” has undergone many changes in the Victorian Government’s upgrade of rail infrastructure across Melbourne. In this article, GHS member Peter Simmenauer investigates the beginnings of the rail extension past Heidelberg in the early 1900s.**

## **BUILDING THE HEIDELBERG TO ELTHAM RAILWAY**

by **Peter Simmenauer**  
**February 2018**

The story of the Heidelberg to Eltham railway extension must be considered in the context of Victorian politics in the 1880s and 1890s. Without the means of quick, cheap and efficient travel to and from Melbourne’s suburbs, the thousands of building blocks that were sold and resold during the land boom of the 1880s would not have found buyers. This was the key to the building of the railway network to the suburbs and in rural areas of Victoria, much of which was useless, driven as it was by speculation rather than the needs of the population.

Many members of Parliament were only too ready to be bribed by means of advance knowledge of future rail developments, which enabled them and their associates to buy land cheaply and resell after the line



*Tommy Bent*

went through at a huge profit. The notorious Tommy Bent who became Minister for Railways for a period was a heavy speculator and himself initiated a vast building program financed by borrowings of millions of pounds. These plans enabled even greater fortunes to be made by speculators, and the Victorian debt was estimated at 9 million pounds at the turn of the century, all of which were loan monies which involved interest and repayments over many years. In an effort to clean up the mess, a later

Premier set up a board to administer and plan rail development, headed by an English rail expert, Robert Speight. Speight, however, was influenced by the land boomers to such an extent that he recommended legislation known as the “Octopus Act” (**Railway Construction Act 1884**) because it authorised the construction of a further 65 lines totalling 1,170 miles, many of which were never built, and some of which were spectacularly unsuccessful, such as the Outer Circle.

*The Age* newspaper, however investigated the operation of the railways and published scathing criticisms of Speight and his administration. Speight sued for libel, and the ensuing legal proceedings, which extended for 18 months into 1894, resulted in victory for the newspaper.

So it was not surprising that local efforts to secure a line to Greensborough to service the local community were not acted upon promptly by the scandal-ridden government, despite statistics showing that the line was needed by local people and that a high volume of traffic would be likely. E. H. Cameron MLA informed the Legislative Assembly that 3,705 people would benefit; that the volume of produce that might be transported by rail amounted to nearly 99,000 tons, comprising fruit, cereals, root crops and wood. Further statistics were provided to the Legislative Assembly by Mr. Cameron in February 1900.

There are a number of such efforts recorded: a public meeting on 7 September 1883 chaired by the Shire President, Mr. J. Scotland, formed a Railway League, with F. Flintoff as Secretary and Treasurer. It was noted that a survey of a route between Heidelberg and Whittlesea was being made.

Another very well attended meeting of the

Heidelberg Railway Extension League was held on 17 February 1888, at which it was decided that meetings with delegates from Eltham and Diamond Creek would be held, and of which Mr. F. A. Nell was elected Hon. Secretary. This meeting took place on 6 March, and it was agreed that statistics would be gathered to support the case.

*The Age* of 11 July 1892 reported that a proposal to extend the line from Heidelberg to Hurstbridge via Greensborough and Eltham had been included in the Railway Bill of 1890 and had been favourably viewed by the Railway Standing Committee. The Committee reported that the Heidelberg to Eltham section could be built for 60,000 pounds provided that land was given free and the residents would contribute up to 5,000 for expenses if needed. The Minister for Railways had authorised a permanent survey, and no real construction difficulties regarding the land were anticipated. Some offers of free land and timber were reported. The value of the project in providing jobs for unemployed local men was emphasised. F. A. Nell, writing as Hon. Sec. of the Central Railway League to the Secretary, Minister of Railways, informed him of the approval of League members of plans and schedule for the construction proposal, and recommended that a Railway Trust and District would be the best means of acquiring the land required, and requested that the Minister so proceed in accordance with the Railways Lands Acquisition Act No. 1288. A submission by the Board of Land and Works Railways Construction Branch to this effect was sent to the Governor in Council on 23 June 1893.

*The Mercury and Weekly Courier* of 20 July 1893 reported that the last session of Parliament had authorised the construction of the extension on condition that a guarantee of 5,000 pounds was made. Mr. James withdrew his guarantee, but offered land in lieu. The Heidelberg and Eltham Railway Construction Trust, chaired by Mr E. H. Cameron MLA, Shire President, was formed to obtain the land required for the

extension and to hand it over to the Railway Department free of cost. A Railway Construction District was proclaimed of 42,000 acres according to the Railway Land Acquisition Act. The trust's duties included classifying the land and establishing differential ratings based on the distance of the land from the line or station, ranging from 2d. to 6d. in the pound.

An article in the *Evelyn Observer* of 13 April 1894 recorded the beginning of the most bitterly contested issue relating to the extension. A deviation from the surveyed route had been proposed by a number of local landholders and recommended by the Trust at their meeting of 26 January 1894, allegedly to lower land acquisition costs. The Minister indicated approval, but said that the decision was in the hands of the Trust. Sure enough, a protest meeting took place on 13 April at which the valuation of the land by the Trust was stated as 1,585 pounds, while claims by the owners amounted to 3,437 pounds. Nevertheless, a deputation of local residents met with the Minister claiming that the Trust acted without consulting them and gave them no chance to negotiate. They indicated that a major ground of their objection was that the deviation would bypass the town of Greensborough by some half to three quarters of a mile, which was not in the town's interest. Furthermore, part of the saving stated by the Trust as a reason for adopting the deviation was owing to an offer of free land by a large landowner whose land would appreciate in value by the line passing through it, an improper procedure which could set a precedent for other such deals, as well as adversely affecting Greensborough landowners. Some Trust members were interested in the deviation, as it went through their land.

A special meeting of the Trust was held on 26 April to receive a deputation from Greensborough. The discussion included the fact that some residents had gone to considerable expense in taking measures that assumed that the line would follow the

permanent survey that had been undertaken, as well as the factors previously brought forward. Mr. F. A. Nell was identified as the person who offered land on the deviation route without cost. Others who would have profited from the deviation included the Bundoora Park Estate Company, the Greensborough Estate Company and A. A. Donnithorne. The Trust held to their decision. At a further public meeting at Diamond Creek, a Trust member stated that other advantages of the deviation beside reduced outlay on land were shortening of the distance, fewer level crossings and lower cost of construction and maintenance. The meeting agreed to wait on the Minister to request a stay to enable the deviation to be further evaluated for practicability. A meeting of the Trust on 12 May received a plan of the deviation from the Railways Department, which indicated that a station could be built quarter or half a mile from the township. Mr C. H. James also undertook to hand over the land required of him immediately.



*Railway construction workers 1902*

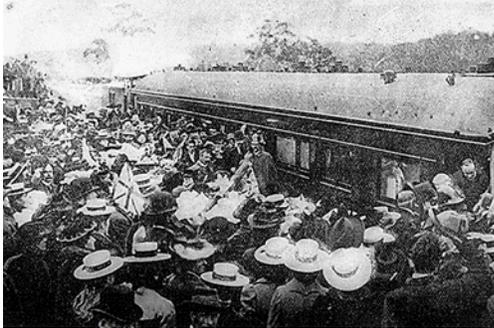
Legal complications regarding the actions of the trust in setting rates, obtaining land and borrowing in order to pay for it before handing it over to the railways department delayed matters for some time. Mr E. H. Cameron informed the Legislative Assembly of the situation on 18 December 1896, and the Premier Sir George Turner agreed to refer the matter to the Railways Standing Committee for resolution. No action was taken, some reasons being differing opinions by successive Ministers for Railways on the stalemate, decisions relating to alternative lines to Heidelberg (the Princes Bridge to Collingwood option

was finally decided on), criticisms by *The Age*, and proposals to reduce costs by building a narrow gauge line. In the meantime, the Trust proceeded with classifying land, setting rates and commencing negotiations with land holders, however, no decision on the final route had been made. The Legislative Assembly received a further update and more detailed statistics from Mr. Cameron in February 1900. On 7 April, the Trust reiterated its preference for the deviation. Two meetings favourable to the original route expressed support for a deputation to the Minister in April 1900.

In July, some action was actually taken! The Minister for Railways, Mr. Outtrim, together with the Ministers for Public Works and Lands, accompanied by Mr Rennick, Railways Engineer-in-Chief, and MLAs Cameron and Gair, visited Greensborough on 6 July 1900 to enquire into the merits of the routes on the spot. They walked over parts of both routes and the sites of the two stations on the respective routes were also inspected. They were met by delegations representing both routes, and were told that a reliable statement of the lowest prices all landowners would accept was needed, upon which the matter would be discussed with the Board of Land and Works. A fortnight later it was announced that the Board had decided the route would follow the original survey, on condition that the property owners would agree to part with the land required for 1,500 pounds.

The Trust met on 4 August and, while expressing their preference for the deviation, agreed to accept the Board's decision and proceed with acquisition of the land as required by the railways. The Railways required 2,800 pounds to be deposited with them, this being approximately the amount estimated to compensate owners of the required land, before authorising commencement of work. This was done and work commenced on 9 September 1900, the line being completed for less than the original estimate on 5 June

1902. It was officially opened by the Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun on Thursday 6 June 1902. Initially, two services a day, Mondays to Saturdays, were offered, and a committee was appointed to revise arrangements as necessary in the future



*Opening of the Eltham extension by the Governor-General, 6 June 1902*

Construction would have been carried out by the Railway Construction Branch of the Board of Lands and Works. Prior to 1890, both Victorian Railways and the private companies that they absorbed, placed contracts with local construction companies to build their railways. A pool of day labourers experienced in railway work was available from British settlers and experienced navvies that had been encouraged to migrate to work in Victoria. This contracting system was abandoned following the financial collapse of 1890, and from 1893, the Railway Construction Branch of the Board of Land and Works took over responsibility for railway construction for Victorian Railways as the client, using day labourers as before. These workers were regarded as "casuals", never as Branch or Railways staff. Despite every effort being made to provide work for the unemployed, few local residents would have been employed unless they possessed specialised skills or equipment. For example, farmers may have been employed to use their horse-drawn carts and scoops for earthmoving of cuts and fills necessary to form the roadbed for the railway, and local timber cutters may have been subcontracted to provide sleepers and

fencing to specifications set by the Branch.



*Greensborough Station*

Records of wages and payments to small sub-contractors have not been found. Contracts were let for girders for bridges such as those supplied by Dorman Long Coy.



*Meeting the train at Greensborough*

Ten years later, in June 1912, the line was extended (single track) to Hurst's Bridge, now Hurstbridge, and electrified, first to Eltham in April 1923 and then to Hurstbridge in August 1929. Eureka!!



*Eltham Station 1910*

***For those of us who wish they lived in early Greensborough, this article from 1923 will give you an idea of the changes that came with the railway.***

## **Greensborough**

The advent of electric trains to Greensborough is already proving a big factor in bringing this beautiful district into prominence as a residential suburb. Not many years ago, the needs of the district were supplied by a service of three steam trains a day, and Greensborough was only regarded as a week-end or holiday resort.

The journey to the city used to occupy an hour, with the change of trains at Heidelberg; but this has now given place to the splendid present service by which the city can be reached in 35 minutes.

Greensborough is but the same distance from the city as Sandringham, and nearer than Ringwood or Mordialloc, and an appreciation of these facts, combined with the natural beauty of the district, is causing numerous enquiries for home sites.

Greensborough has a Yan Yean water supply through the township, and electric light will shortly be available as the Morwell scheme passes within half a mile of the town. All these facts will mean increased population, and it is significant to note that the volume of railway traffic at the local station has doubled in the past two years.

It is safe to assume that this rate of progress will be more than maintained, therefore land in such a locality has the added attraction of being an investment as well as a speculation.

Beautiful residential sites, convenient to the

station, shops and post-office, can be purchased to-day for 20/- to 40/- a foot. Business sites right in the centre of the town, with frontages to Main Road, can be obtained from £3 10/ a foot. These prices undoubtedly present great opportunities for a wise man to invest a portion of his savings to advantage. The properties can be inspected any time by arrangement with C. JESSOP, the local estate agent, whose list offers a wide range from which to choose.

The following is a list of the property which he has sold during the last quarter: 44 lots Township Estate (in conjunction with Sydney T. Haynes and Co.) at an average of 34/- per foot, -£4340. 22 lots at Kelvin Grove Estate (by private sale) at an average of 26/ per foot, -£2195. Account I. Amiet, six acres Montmorency, £605 ; account ,W. McDowell, 5 rms. w.b. house on Main Road, £900 ; account G. Bester, 11 acres river flats- and house, £1060 ; account I. Amiet, 132 feet Main road, frontages at £4 per foot; account W. H. Poulter, 14 acres near proposed station Grace Park at £100 per acre. The total sales amounted to £12,145 2/6.

For properties of all description consult the local agent, C. JESSOP, Heidelberg and Greensborough.

***Hurstbridge Advertiser, 19/10/1923***

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***And finally, a little humour from Picture Post, June 1957:***

“Owing to a printer’s error in the “Fairy Ring” cake recipe last week, “two ounces castor oil” was given for “two ounces castor sugar”. We apologise to our readers for this silly mistake.”

*I hope all your Christmas recipes are successful!*

**Merry Christmas everyone!**

<b>Greensborough Historical Society Inc.</b>			
<b>2019 Meeting Schedule</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Day</b>	<b>Start Time</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>09/02/19</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>1.00 pm</b>	<b>Open day HRC</b>
<b>12/02/19</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>Morning tea See website for details</b>
23/02/19	Saturday	1.15 pm	Forum
29/03/19	Friday	1.15 pm	SGM
<b>09/04/19</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>Morning Tea - See website for details</b>
<b>14/04/19</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>1.00 pm</b>	<b>Open day &amp; BBQ HRC</b>
27/04/19	Saturday	1.15 pm	ANZAC Meeting – GHNH
24/05/19	Friday	1.15 pm	SGM – GHNH
<b>08/06/19</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>1.00 pm</b>	<b>Open day HRC</b>
<b>11/06/19</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>Morning Tea - See website for details</b>
29/06/19	Saturday	1.15 pm	Forum GHNH
26/07/19	Friday	1.15 pm	SGM – GHNH
<b>11/08/19</b>	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>1.00 pm</b>	<b>Open day HRC</b>
<b>13/08/19</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>Morning Tea - See website for details</b>
31/08/19	Saturday	1.15 pm	Forum GHNH
20/09/19	Friday	1.15 pm	AGM - GHNH
<b>08/10/19</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>Morning Tea - See website for details</b>
<b>12/10/19</b>	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>1.00 pm</b>	<b>Open day HRC</b>
26/10/19	Saturday	1.15 pm	Heritage meeting TBA
29/11/19	Friday	1.15 pm	SGM Christmas Meeting – GHNH
<b>10/12/19</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>10.00</b>	<b>Morning Tea - See website for details</b>

**HRC** – Historical Resource Centre (Glenauburn Road Lower Plenty, Corner Para Road)

**GHNH** – Greenhills Neighbourhood House. (Community Drive, off St Helena Road)

**SGM** – Special General Meeting, **AGM** – Annual General Meeting.

Notes: March meeting brought forward to avoid Good Friday.  
September AGM brought forward to avoid Grand Final Eve holiday.

**Printing of this Newsletter supplied courtesy of Colin Brooks MP.**