

Melton Family History Group Inc

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Registered 6th Dec 1994

October 2021-November 2021

Meeting Times: 6:30pm on the second Thursday of each month except for January

Venue: Melton Library – McKenzie Street, Melton

Membership Fee: \$25 per year payable July each year prior to August A.G.M.

Correspondence: 17 Sutherland Ave, Melton Sth, Vic, 3338.

President: Judith Bilszta

Vice President Janeen O'Connell

Secretary: Ian Bowey

Treasurer: Deborah Slattery

Email: sec.meltonfhg@outlook.com

Web site www.meltonfamilyhistory.org

Committee Members: Sue Morton and Pauline Stotten

2021 Monthly Meetings at Melton Library in McKenzie Street.

14 th October	Cancelled.
11 th November	Ian Arnold.
9 th December	Christmas break-up
10 th February	Terry Fogarty on the Melton Aerodrome.

All dates and times are subject to change

Update: Regular work:

Due to continuing stop and start lock-downs our Wednesday help sessions have been greatly affected.

Our Annual General Meeting scheduled for August and then September was postponed for the same reason. Now scheduled as a Zoom meeting on the 14th of October. Talks regarding the new Memorandum of Understanding agreement between Melton Library and the group have been delayed due to government lock-downs. The committee discussed the agreement and decided that some points need to be clarified.

Looking back

In a time of Covid-19 lockdowns, when all are isolated from friends and families, we need to find anchors and continuities in our lives and work. The Melton Family History Group has long been associated with developing not only the specific histories of families, but also the link between those individual histories and the social history of the area. The following two articles reflect on this. First, an extract from the *Shire of Melton Heritage Study* for which our members provided advice, both verbal and written. The *Heritage Study* provides amazing information on both people and places from the past. If you are looking for how your forebears lived and worked in old Melton, these volumes are certainly worth consulting. The second is a newspaper article from 1999 detailing the work of our group at that time – and provides a glimpse of the old library facilities. How lucky we are to have the new Melton Library and Learning Hub.

An extract from a Shire of Melton Heritage Study.

Heritage Overlay 095

Citation No 252

Place: Former Robinson House Tank, The Bullock Track

Location: 122-142 The Bullock Track, Melton West

Critical Dates: Construction: unknown (likely c.1888)

Existing Heritage Listings: None **Recommended Level of Significance:** Local

Consultants: David Molony , David Rowe and Pamela Jellie (2006)



Statement of Significance:

The underground tank at 122-142 The Bullock Track, Melton West is significant as a rare surviving relic of the pockets of small farms that established in Melton West from the time of Crown land sales in the 1850s, as a vestige of the domestic water management that was particularly important on the dry Melton Plains, and for its association with the Robinson family.

The underground tank at 122-142 The Bullock Track, Melton West is historically significant at a LOCAL level (AHC A4, B2, H1). It and another similar underground tank nearby constitute the only substantial physical evidence of the pockets of farming that established in the West Melton area from the mid nineteenth century. It demonstrates the early provision of domestic water supply, a water storage practice no longer in use, and the critical importance of water management in the dry Melton Plains district. Its final destruction by bushfire is also indicative of a major theme in the Shire's history.

It is also historically significant for its association with three generations of the Robinson family, which was prominent in the history of the Shire of Melton, and after whom a major road is named. The family is credited with developing commercial hay farming on the Melton Plains, previously thought too dry for such, in the late nineteenth century. The family thus pioneered a major twentieth century Melton rural industry, and paved the way for Melton's nationally famous chaff production. The Robinson Brothers also played a leading role in the local chaff milling industry through their ownership of chaff mills at Diggers Rest and Melton South. The family has also been prominent in civic affairs, a member of the family being a Shire Councillor for most of the twentieth century. GE Robinson's family donated the President's Seat – the carved chair used by Melton Shire Presidents since 1966.

Description:

The underground tank is situated at 122-142 The Bullock Track , on the north side. It is situated where the road bends slightly south, meaning that the tank is directly in front of vehicles travelling west along The Bullock Track, and is thus one of the most prominent underground tanks in the Shire.

Although commonly called 'wells', such structures are almost always underground tanks, or cisterns, used to store water run off from the roofs of a nearby house or farm outbuildings. The water in this tank came from the original stone and brick building that was situated just to its north. The place comprises a concrete dome with concrete lid, over a brick tank, with a concrete render. This is a typical type of underground tank in the Shire, probably dating from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. Unusually, it had no hand or powered pump: the cold water was pulled up in a bucket tied to a rope. Currently it is overgrown with a flowering prostrate plant, and wild grass. A cast horses head placed on top of the tank gives it a certain prominence, but detracts a little from its integrity. Its segmental dome is consistent with it having been constructed in the late nineteenth century.

History:

William Robinson and his wife Ann set sail for Australia immediately after their marriage in Durham, England in 1852. After 2 years on the goldfields they began farming in Werribee. In 1872, in addition to their 'Mt Pleasant' farm in Wyndham, they purchased 832 acres in the south-east corner of Melton (between Mt Cottrell and Tarneit), adjacent to what is now Robinsons Road, the

main north-south access road and gateway to the Shire. This was a very large farm by the standards of the day. Robinson had been a stonemason, and built a house on the land which does not survive.

In 1884 he moved to 'Deep Creek' (an early alternative name for Djerriwarrh Creek) in Melton West, with four of his sons. One of the sons, William, married Catherine Raleigh. Another brother, Isaac, married a sister of Catherine, Henrietta. These were the daughters of neighbour Henry Raleigh and his wife Catherine, nee McDonald, of Toolern Vale. Raleigh had been a Norwegian sailor who jumped ship in the goldrush, and anglicized his name from Hans Christian Reiersen.

In 1888, William junior built the bluestone dwelling that had been associated with this place, in which he and Catherine raised nine children. William senior died in 1890. Ratebooks show that by 1902 William junior had apportioned his 573 acres amongst sons George, Isaac and Thomas. This land comprised allotment 6D (the homestead allotment) and 2A (further south near the highway). William junior was elected to Council and became Shire President in 1900.

14 April 1999

NEWS

Fossicking for forebears

By **CHRISTINE ABRAHAM**

MELTON Family History Group members are becoming genealogical super sleuths.

The group met at the Melton library last week to scroll through microfiche and flick through books in the search for more information on their heritage.

Their conversation was punctuated with exclamations like "Oh, St Catherine's House!"

To the uninitiated, the name would have no significance but for many on a genealogical hunt, it is a place where some mysteries are solved — St Catherine's House, London, holds the information of English births, deaths and marriages.

Mrs Gail Chambers is a member of the group and is becoming an expert in the search for lost relatives.

She published her family history in 1995 with the aid of a friend.

She had a mailing list of 250 relatives and many have since bought her book.

Mrs Chambers said researching family history can become an obsession.

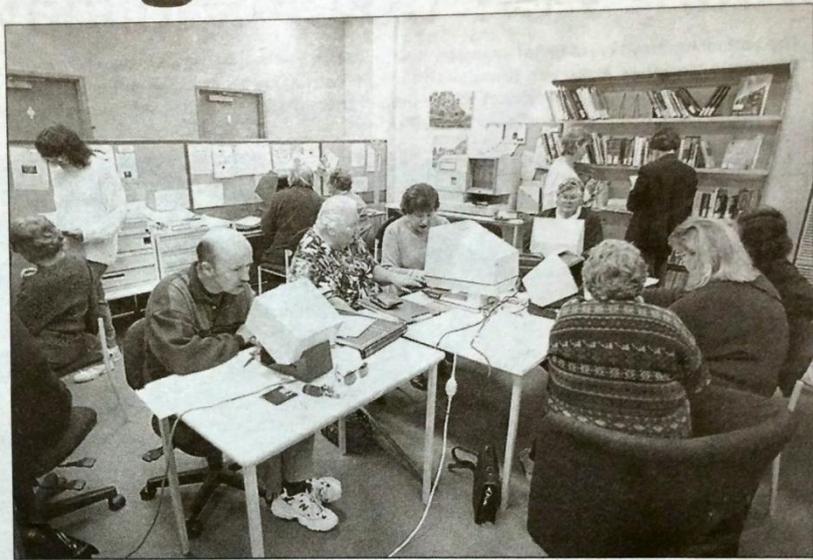
"The library (can help people) overcome problems they might encounter in the search," she said.

"There is always some Internet site or book that can help."

Mrs Chambers said people should first find out as much as possible from their grandparents and parents.

"They should nut it out on a piece of paper and then they can use the Australian birth, death and marriage index for information," Mrs Chambers said.

"In the workshops, we direct



SUPER SLEUTHS: those interested in family history can take part in workshops at the Melton Library. Pictures: WAYNE HAWKINS

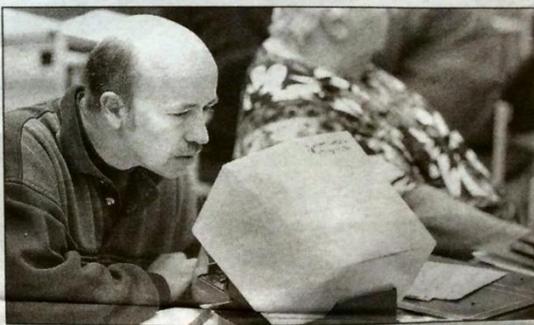
people to different sources like the 1881 British census — it is a complicated tool.

"When we found that people had trouble using it, we commenced a workshop."

Mrs Chambers began researching her family history because of her unusual maiden name (Telford) and her love of history.

The Melton Family History Group meets every second Thursday of the month from 7.30 pm and on every fourth Wednesday of the month from 10 am.

Inquiries: Alan 9743 4023



YOUR HISTORY: Michael May searches for clues to his family's past.

The above article is supplied by Deb Slattery.

A family home in the East End of London post World War 2.

Part of my own family history research led me to finding that one particular house in London's East End was occupied by quite a large number of the same family members. The earliest census found was the 1891 census, where my great grandfather lived. My grandfather lived in the same house in a later census with his wife and family.

Fast forward to post-war London, and my parents lived in the same house after they married in 1942, along with my mother's parents, two siblings and my mother's aunt. The 1898 Electoral Roll describes this house as 'three rooms, first floor, unfurnished'. Below are the memories of a relative from his time in London:

St.Leonards Ave Poplar

I remember St Leonard's Avenue well as I used to visit my aunt Lizzie (your grandmother) frequently in the 40s and 50s. The road was about twelve feet wide and single carriageway. None of the terraced houses had any front garden and garages were unheard of. Access was straight off the narrow pavement into a hallway. There was a front room (only used on Sundays or for parties at Christmas); a middle room (another bedroom in the 1940's) and at the back a dining room/scullery where most day-to-day living took place. Beyond that was a small kitchen with a back door. There was no bathroom (baths were taken, if at all, in a zinc tub hauled into the dining room, placed in front of the fire and filled with hot water from the Aga-like stove). The toilet was a 'thunder box' outside in the back yard. There was just enough rear garden to house a few rabbits and chickens, kept for eating, not pets. Upstairs were three bedrooms. The only heating came from coal fires in the three rooms downstairs; the coal was kept in a cupboard underneath the stairs. At the end of the road was a bomb site, evidence of a near miss during WW2 when Adolf was trying to demolish the London docks just a stone's throw away; I used to play there amongst the rubble during the 1950s. Opposite was a grocer's stabling yard with big tall gates; we never managed to get inside for a look around! Nobody had any money and yet nobody was poor because everyone was in the same boat and what you had you shared so there was great community spirit. In the summer time the lady of the house would sit outside the front door, usually with knitting or darning, and just chat with neighbours who were similarly engaged.

Thank you for reminding me of St Leonard's Avenue; it has felt good to revive some of the memories. I cannot imagine any family these days in the so-called civilised world wanting to live in such Dickensian conditions, but we did and we survived!

