



## 2011 Meeting Dates

February 5  
March 5  
April 2  
May 7  
June 4

Our February meeting is at the Athenaeum Theatre Castella St., Lilydale From March onwards our meetings will be held in the Court House, 61 Castella St, Lilydale at 1pm

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*Lilydale & District Historical Society*  
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Contacts:  
President: 9735 1661  
Secretary: 9761 9192

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## It's all go for our big O Day

The society will officially open the doors of its new home on Saturday, February 12 at 11am.

And everyone is welcome to join in the historic occasion.

Just one word of warning, there won't be much to see but you can wander around our new home.

The shire has supplied tables and chairs and we will have plenty of tea, coffee and sugar on hand.

Please bring along a cup so you can have a celebratory cup of tea or coffee with us.

Opening the doors is the first of many steps we will be taking in the next few months as we settle in.

There is a lot to do from training volunteers to open the doors for the public to setting up our archive, research materials and the office.

To steal the words from that charismatic President, John F. Kennedy: Ask not what your society can do for you - ask what you can do for your society.

If you would like to be a volunteer, call either Lorraine and Sue and talk about how you can help.

For those who are time poor, on page two is the list of things the society needs. If you can help, call either Lorraine Smith (9735 1104) or Sue Thompson (9761 9192).



*The society's new home at the old Lilydale Court House, 61 Castella St, Lilydale.*

## History in the making

During the coming months the society is creating its own little slice of local history.

On Saturday, February 5 we will celebrate our final meeting in the Athenaeum Theatre which came to our aid when we had no where to hold our meetings and they didn't charge us.

When we take over the court house on February 12, we will also be moving all our archive and equipment from the Lilydale Library. Again the library and staff have been enormously supportive and willingly gave us space in the library so we could continue to offer a research service to the community.

### Inaugural meeting

Our inaugural meeting in our new home will be held on Saturday, March 5 just 6 days before our 40th birthday.

The first meeting of the society was held at the Lilydale Shire offices (now the museum) on March 11, 1971.

The meeting will begin at 1pm and at 2pm we will welcome our guest speaker, [Victorian Railways historian and author Michael Foley](#).

Mr Foley is passionate about the former Warburton railway. He will present a photographic journey along the line from Lilydale to Warburton with many contemporary shots blended with rare historical images and documents; the building of the railway and special events and significant incidents in the line's history.

*(continued page 2.)*

## Society Information

### Research

Due to the increasing demand for research and the failure of some people to pay for the information provided, the society's executive has now introduced a new system to ensure any inquiries are handled quickly and efficiently and payment is received.

All inquiries must be in writing and go to our archivist Sandy Ross at [aross35@bigpond.com](mailto:aross35@bigpond.com) Sandy will contact the people involved and provide a written quotation. No research will be done until the quotation is paid.

Our charges are \$20 per hour.

Anyone with any queries can contact Sandy direct on 9735 1661.

### Talks, tours and walks

Anyone looking for a speaker or a different place to go should contact Lorraine Smith as the society has several members willing to give talks about their area of special interest.

These include Melba, aspects of Lilydale township and its history, Lilydale Cemetery, the Lilydale Express newspaper and Lilydale's military history.

Contact Lorraine Smith on 9735 1104.

### Speakers program

Lorraine Smith is presently compiling a list of people to approach as guest speakers at the society meetings or special evenings next year. If you have heard someone - not necessarily related to heritage - who you found interesting and entertaining, please call Lorraine on 9735 1104.

### On the airwaves

Listen to the Radio Station 98.1 FM. The society is on the airwaves on the second Tuesday in the month from 9,30 am to 10am. The other societies on other Tuesdays are Ringwood, Knox and Croydon

### Keep up to date

If you want to find out more information about the society, our local history, its people and places or about Dame Nellie Melba go to:

[www.lilydalehistorical.com.au](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au) or

[www.nelliemelbamuseum.com.au](http://www.nelliemelbamuseum.com.au)



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## History in the making (cont'd)

Afterwards everyone is welcome to join us for afternoon tea. The cost is free to members and \$2 for non-members.

The first meeting that led to the formation of the society was held at the Lillydale Shire offices (now the museum) on March 11, 1971.

Just for the record, it's worth publishing the information from the first Minute Book:

The people present at that meeting were:

Cr. M. Seymour, Cr. A. Smith, Cr. A. Chandler, Messrs. H. McCoombe, K. Marriott, M. Holt, R. Holt, G. Woodside, L. Blackburn, A. Ross, H. Sebire, K. Hawkey, H. Brown, Ms. A. Woodside, B. Sebire, N. Gordon, APOLOGIES - Cr G. de Pury, Cr J. Sawyer, Mr T. Mitchell, Mrs V. Walker.

Purpose - To form a Historical Society; To collect and collate historical information and records.

The Shire Council, as a continuing body would provide archive storage. INITIAL FOCUS (suggested by H. McCoombe - Royal Historical Society) Research and record history of early settlers and citizens and investigate the records of the formation of early churches and schools.

Moved by L. Blackburn, seconded by H. Brown that the Society be formed within the Shire of Lillydale. - Carried.

COMMITTEE - Messrs. Blackburn, Brown, Hawkey and Ross. TREASURER - Mr Hawkey; SECRETARY - Mr Brown; PRESIDENT - Mr Blackburn to act pro-tern for 3 months. SUBSCRIPTION - \$1.00

Leigh Blackburn remained the society's president until 1990 and Sandy Ross is still on the committee and has been our president since 2001.

## It was a day to remember

The weather was kind, the garden magnificent, the food fantastic, the wine first class and the generosity of the people of the valley all combined to make the Wallace Gardens Gala Day a huge success.

Guests were limited to 100 and sadly we had to turn away many late comers.

The ticket sales, raffle, wine and donations from people unable to attend, saw the day raised \$3070.

Special thanks must go to Colin and Christine Wallace and their extended family who worked tirelessly to make the day such a huge success.

Special thanks must go to our Patron Pamela, Lady Vestey who donated the raffle prizes and Coombe Farm wine for the day.

### Opening Hours

The society will open the doors of the old Lilydale Court House on Wednesdays, Friday afternoons, the weekends, and public holidays throughout the year.

The hours will be 11am to 4pm and Friday 1 to 4pm.

## Lilydale Court House history

## The story behind the building

The Department of Public Works called for tenders for the erection of the court house, Lillydale on February 12, 1876. (Note the spelling of Lillydale.)

Interested people could see the specifications and drawings at the Department of Public Works or the police station, Lillydale.

Tenders closed at noon on Thursday, February 24, 1876.

A preliminary deposit of 25 pounds (\$50) was required with the tender.

The Victorian Gazette recorded the successful tender was by William Blyth and the amount was 961 pounds (\$1922).

It seems there may have been a problem or two at the site as in August an advertisement was run seeking a good carpenter to work on the court house, Lillydale.

The town's first substantial building would have attracted more than a little attention as the townsfolk and visitors watched its erection.

One savvy real estate agent thought location was everything and included the court house in his sales adverts in October 1876: "A choice freehold of two acres of land near the Court-house, Lillydale."

Lilydale's design was similar to about nine other court houses built in the 1870s. The design has been attributed to Samuel White and Walter Nation of the Victorian Public Works Department.

The court houses included Oakleigh (built 1870), Ballan (1872), Koroit (1872), Huntly (1873-74), Lexton (1873-4), Wahgunyah (1873-4), Steiglitz (1874), Lilydale (1876) and Avenel (1875-6).

The back room was added in 1967.

The court house was added to the National Trust of Victoria's register in 1970.

The citation said: "A well founded substantial brick courthouse building, prominent carbels, pediment gable and round window heads, recalling the work of Paxton and in the idiom of the Villa Rustica. (24/4/70).

In 1978 the building was considered so important it was

added to the National Estate Register of the Australian Heritage Commission.

The citation says it all:

"Courthouse, Castella Street, Lilydale, is an important example of both the work of the Public Works department (PWD) and of this form of Courthouse. It forms an important part of the townscape of Lilydale, has historical association with the settlement and growth of both town and district and is architecturally important as a notable example of Italianate Classical revival design."

The court house served the community for more than 121 years before the court was closed in 1997. In that time, leading citizens, farmers, businessmen, councillors and shire presidents served as Justices of the Peace and handed down their decisions on the cases before them. With the court now sitting in Ringwood, the building lay idle until in August 2000, the Justice Department deemed the building surplus to its needs.

In the same year, Lilydale Primary School was given the use of court

house as a music and arts facility. However, two weeks after classes started, there was a fire at the rear and the building rendered unusable.

It sat empty waiting for something to happen.

In February 2005, the shire of Yarra Ranges purchased the building and began working out how it could be used by the community.

It was not until the 2008/09 council budget that \$60,000 was allocated to restore the building.

Plans were developed and tenders called. Tenders closed on April 2, 2008 and the tender awarded to Eastwood Properties Pty Ltd on June 6, 2008. The project cost was \$192,221.

In 2008 the Yarra Ranges Museum staff moved into the building after the museum further down Castella Street was closed for redevelopment. This year, 2011, the Lilydale & District Historical Society will take over the building which will be shared with the U3A.



### Lilydale Travel Centre

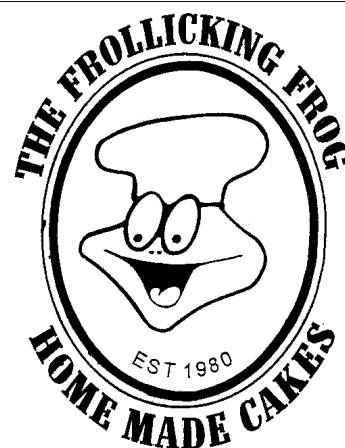
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**Ian Garbett**  
Managing Director

219 Main Street Lilydale Vic 3140  
Email: lilydaletravel@bigpond.com

Tel: 03 9735 1144  
Fax: 03 9735 3201



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150th birthday celebrations

# Memories of Melba

## 1861 - 2011

Sunday, May 1 to May 29, 2011



The society has worked closely with our Patron, Pamela, Lady Vestey to compile this list of events designed to promote Melba, the person who proudly called Lilydale and Coldstream home. Be sure to book for one or more of the activities and bring along a friend or two to join in the celebrations. Brochures are being printed and more details will be available shortly on our websites [www.lilydalehistorical.com.au](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au) or [www.nelliemelbamuseum.com.au](http://www.nelliemelbamuseum.com.au)

### Cemetery Tours



Join our experienced guides on special Melba tours to Lilydale Cemetery. During May, three tours have been organised, each focusing on a different aspect of Melba's life in the local community.

**Sunday, May 1 at 2pm.**

#### *Melba and Other Amazing Women*

Dame Nellie Melba was in awe of the pioneering spirit of women. This tour explores the seemingly insurmountable hardship these pioneering women faced.

**Sunday, May 15 at 2pm.**

#### *Melba and Her Family*

To Dame Nellie Melba her family meant everything to her. Visit the graves of her parents David and Isabella Mitchell, her siblings and their descendants.

**Sunday: May 29 at 2pm.**

#### *Melba and Her Mates*

As a world star and a local resident, Melba inspired many people be they artists, friends or families who worked for her. Learn more about these people and their untiring devotion to the Diva.

Groups can book their own tour. Maximum of 20 people.

Tours start at the entrance at Victoria and Nelson roads.

#### **Bookings essential.**

**Cost:** \$10.00 a person and includes tour guide and cemetery book.

**Phone: Lorraine Smith 9735 1104.**

Afterwards guests are welcome at the Lilydale Court House, 61 Castella St, Lilydale for a cup of tea or coffee.

**Groups wanting to do a tour at another time should contact Lorraine.**

### Guided Coach Tours

The society and local tour operator Yarra Valley Specialty Tours have combined to offer groups the chance to learn about the local places that played an important part in Melba's life.

Tour guides will tell the stories behind places such as

- Cave Hill Quarry, established by Melba's father David Mitchell in the 1870s, led to Melba's lifelong love of the Yarra Valley;
- Coombe Farm Vineyard formerly Coombe Farm was purchased by Melba in 1912;
- Coombe Cottage, often referred to as the home behind the hedge was Melba's country home.
- St Patrick's Church was erected by Melba's father.



- The Athenaeum Theatre was the scene of many triumphant Melba concerts.
- Melba Park was named in Melba's honour.
- Yarra Ranges Regional Museum.
- Lilydale Cemetery is Melba's final resting place.

Tours available weekdays during May include pick up in the metro area, a three-course lunch at York on Lilydale and a tour pamphlet.

#### **Costs**

Groups of 15 to 24 people - \$63.00 per person

Groups of 25-35 people - \$51.00 person

Groups 36-57 people \$41.00 per person

Weekend tours departing from the Lilydale Court House are available for \$31 a person. Lunch is not included.

**For more information and bookings phone Yarra Valley Specialty Tours on 5966 2035.**



## Our April events

**Sunday, April 17 at 1pm:**

Our Military Heroes Cemetery Tour.

Meet at the cemetery entrance, cnr Victoria and Nelson roads, Lilydale.

Cost \$10 a person incl booklet. Bookings essential. Call Lorraine 9735 1104.

Coffee and tea is available afterwards at the Lilydale Court House.

**Wednesday, April 17 at 7pm:**

Military historian Anthony McAleer will talk about his research into our local servicemen and women and provide insight into how you can research your own military family members.

Venue: Lilydale Court House, 61 Castella St. Cost \$2 for members \$4 for non-members.

Join us for a cuppa after the talk.

# Memories of Melba 1861 - 2011

## Walk in Melba's Lilydale

Experienced society tour guides will take you for a leisurely Walk in Melba's Lilydale.

- Pause outside the stately Athenaeum building and relive the many Melba triumphs;
- See the stately David Mitchell Gates at the entrance of Melba Park and look at the new Yarra Ranges Regional Museum.
- In Main St wander past the fire bell outside the Lilydale Fire Station. Formerly in a tower in the centre of town it is the bell Melba rang in the middle of the night to tell the residents World War I had ended.
- Next to the fire bell is the site of the former Band Rotunda, the scene of Melba's historic welcome back to Lilydale in 1902.
- Opposite is the Crown Hotel which hosted dinner for Melba on that occasion before her return to Melbourne by train.
- Stroll back to the Court House via Melba Park; St Patrick's Church and St John's Church.



The tours start at the Lilydale Court House, 61 Castella St, Lilydale. Group bookings welcome. Maximum of 15 people per tour guide.

### Dates:

**Saturday, May 7 at 1pm**

**Wednesday, May 11 at 10am**

**Cost:** \$10.00 per person which includes tour pamphlet.

Morning and afternoon tea is available for \$5.

**Bookings essential. Phone: Lorraine Smith 9735 1104.**

## 150th Birthday Celebrations

After an early morning visit to Melba's grave members will host a special function in the afternoon at the Athenaeum Theatre.

The function will feature a performance by a Melba Scholarship winner courtesy the Melba Opera Trust and a special reflection on Melba's life by Professor Mel Waters, former director of the Melba Conservatorium of Music.

Also on the program will be the opening of the society's time capsule buried on October 13, 1995 to raise funds for the museum redevelopment. The capsule was marked to be opened on Melba's 150th birthday - May 19, 2011.

All businesses and schools who contributed to the capsule and the fund-raising will be invited to attend.

## Walking in Melba's Footsteps

Local Primary and Secondary Schools will be Walking in Melba's Footsteps around Lilydale to learn more about the contribution the Diva made to the local community.

Society members will be on hand to explain the important role each place played in Dame Nellie Melba's life.

**Date: Wednesday, May 18.**

The schools invited to participate include Lilydale, Lilydale West, Yering and Coldstream primary schools; Mt Lilydale College; St Patrick's School; Lilydale High School; Lilydale West Secondary College and Lilydale Adventist Academy.

## Society Talks

Society members will be giving a series of talks on Melba, her family and her life in her home town.

The Dates and topics are:

**Wednesday, May 4 at 7pm**

The Industrious David Mitchell (Sue Thompson)

**Friday, May 21 at 1pm**

Coombe Cottage the Home behind the Hedge and Melba's Life in Lilydale (Sandy Ross).

**Wednesday, May 25 at 7pm**

Melba's Lasting Legacy (Sue Thompson)

**Cost: \$2 per person, tea and coffee available.**

All talks will be given at the society's home, the Lilydale Court House, 61 Castella St, Lilydale.

## List of things we need

If anyone can help us with the donation of any of the things listed below, please call either Sue (9761 9192) or Lorraine (9735 1104):

**Kitchen:** cutlery, microwave, trays, large plates, coffee mugs, tea towels, hand towels.

**Office:** Three or four-draw filing cabinets; large steel cabinets; 5 desks about 120cm x 60cm; metal shelving; TV with video and dvd capabilities; audio system with microphone and projector; copying paper; manilla folders, suspension folders.

## Any photos?

Do any members have photos of the Court House we can add to our collection? Being at the top of the hill and perhaps because it was beside the Police Station, there seem to be very few photos taken of it.

If you have any photos call Sandy Ross on 9735 1161 or Sue Thompson 9761 9192.

## Letter to the Editor

Dear Sue,

Therese & I really enjoyed our tour of Lilydale Cemetery. Please thank Keith for the great stories that gave us so much insight into Lilydale & its people. We'd come to the cemetery tour out of interest as we regularly pass by on our drives to Yarra Glen & beyond. We'll be sure to stop in now, especially as we have the booklets to guide us.

Also, both Therese & I enjoyed Keith's approach as a guide - allowing everyone to contribute, comment & question rather than merely leading &/or talking at us was much appreciated & added to our enjoyment. Congratulations to everyone at the Society for their work.

Christine Badawy, Ferntree Gully

Letters and articles for *Now & Then* are welcome. Please send to:

PO Box 834 Lilydale Vic. 3140 or email:

suehompson50@ozemail.com.au

deadline: March 1 for April edition.

If undeliverable return to:  
Lilydale & District Historical Society  
P.O. Box 834, Lilydale Vic 3140

**Now & Then by email**

With the rising costs of paper and postage, the society is inviting members who are happy to receive their newsletter by email to contact Sue Thompson at [suethompson50@ozemail.com.au](mailto:suethompson50@ozemail.com.au) and I will email a copy to you. Back copies are also available electronically.

**Society books for sale only from the Lilydale Court House**

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| 30 years of History (1971-2001) compiled by Sandy Ross  | \$ 3.00 |
| Reminiscences of Life Notes and memories of Lilydale residents, edited by Sue Thompson & Myrna McBain.  | \$14.50 |
| Prosperity & Progress (1889-1989) The History of the former Shire of Lillydale Offices by Sue Thompson. | \$5.00  |
| Lilydale Primary School Pupil Register  | \$15.00 |

**Also available**

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| Yarra Valley Historical  |        |
| A brief look at early life in the Valley during mid 1800s to 1900s |        |
| Vol 1. Issue 7. Special 36 page Lilydale Edition.                  |        |
| The Early History of Lillydale/Lilydale                            | \$5.00 |

Please ring Sandy on 97351661 to purchase these books or any historical society publications.

**Your Membership**

Members are the life blood of any organisation and that includes your society. As a member you receive many benefits:

- Free access to our extensive archive of families, places and events in our community;
- Free access to our digital archives such as the Lillydale Express and rate books;
- Four issues each year of our newsletter

- Now & Then by either mail or email
- Invitations to all our special events, talks and tours;
  - Discounts on all our publications; and
  - Opportunity to learn more about our local history.

Renew your membership or invite a friend to join our society today by filling out the form below.

**Membership Subscription 2010-2011 are now due**

**Membership Subscription 2009-2010 were due on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010.** (If you are not sure if you are financial, please ring Lorraine on 9735 1104 to check.)

Name of Member: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

|                                 |         |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| Family Membership .....         | \$20.00 |
| Single membership .....         | \$15.00 |
| Pensioners .....                | \$10.00 |
| Students (under 16 years) ..... | \$5.00  |

Amount enclosed: \$ .....

**SEND TO:**  
The Treasurer  
Lilydale & District  
Historical Society  
P.O. Box 834,  
LILYDALE 3140

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