



### Meeting Dates

#### 2016

- May 7
- June 4
- July 2
- August 6
- September 3
- October 1
- November 5
- December 3

All meetings are held on the 1st Saturday of the month (except as shown above) at 1pm at the Old Lilydale Court House 61 Castella St., Lilydale. Guest speakers start at 2pm.

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## Jim Sawyer receives Life Membership

As Jim Sawyer was too ill to attend our February meeting where the society was to present him with a Life Membership, several members visited Jim Sawyer at Wantirna Health on Thursday, April 14.

It was a great surprise for Jim to finally receive recognition for his support for many years of the Lilydale & District Historical Society.

Society Vice President, John Brown presented Jim with his framed certificate and also read out the citation society President Sue Thompson had prepared for the February meeting.

Afternoon tea was generously supplied by Shirley Poulter and everyone enjoyed the company and stories that were told. **See Page 3 for Citation.**



*Members celebrate Jim Sawyer's Life Membership.  
 Back row: Shirley Poulter, John Brown and Les Skate.  
 Front row: Mary Hamilton, Joan Skate and Lorraine Smith.*

## Lilydale Primary School turns 150

On March 8 member Ruby Kwijas spoke on Eastern Community Broadcasters about her connection with Lilydale State School, established in 1866 - now Lilydale Primary School -which is celebrating its 150th birthday this year:

“My grandparents Walker came to the mainland from Tasmania in 1923 looking for work.

My mother Melba Maude registered at No. 876 with her brothers, sister and cousins in 1924.

I, Ruby Humphries attended State School No. 876 along with my brothers and sisters from 1937-1950s.

My son Andreas Kwijas attended No 876 1961 to 1969 making three generations of our family attending that school.”

*Continued page 2.*

### 75 years of funeral care

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## ANZACS

The society has now put up on line all the names of the local people who answered the call during World War I.

Our dedicated team of researchers are now completing the service records and family stories of our Diggers and each week more are being added to our website.

Sadly, we have ANZACS for which we have no information other than their name which was included on one of our many local honour boards. If you can help us with more information please complete our special

inquiry form.

To follow the progress of our ANZACS project, go to: [www.lilydalehistorical.com.au](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au) and click on the *They Answered the Call* link on the home page to see the listings.

### 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, call Lorraine on 9735 1104.

### Lilydale Primary School's 150th birthday

As part of its celebrations, the school has gathered together about 300 scanned photos which have been scanned for a photo album.

A copy of these 706 scanned photos has been donated to our society and is held as a separate collection.

In our own collection we have more than 260 images.

Joining in the spirit of things, Lorraine Smith is organising a special display on the school.

### Annual General Meeting and Elections

Our Annual General Meeting and Ordinary meeting will be held on Saturday, July 2 at 1pm so all members are urged to renew their membership beforehand so they can participate in the elections. Our last page has our renewal form.

If you would like to stand for any position, nomination forms are now available at the Old Lilydale Court House.

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## Jim Sawyer's Citation

Since our inception in 1971, the society has created Life Memberships to many members all of whom have made a very valuable contribution to our work in various ways.

Today, it is with much pleasure I present a Life Membership to James or Jim Sawyer for his support of our society since its inception in 1971.

At the time Jim was a councillor of the Shire of Lillydale representing the North Riding which covered the township of Lilydale.

Jim had been elected to the council in 1965 and served until 1979.

In 1971 Cr Maurie Seymour was the shire President who initiated the meeting which led to the formation of the Lillydale & District Historical Society. He was succeeded by Jim who presided over the Shire of Lillydale Centenary Celebrations with Cr Seymour.

On April 22, 1971 Jim joined our society and is our second oldest surviving member. He actively supported the society when it wanted to establish a museum in the old shire offices and has continued that support to today.

Jim has a great love of history. His father Charles took up land after World War I and with his brothers on adjoining properties the Sawyer brothers became very successful dairy farmers who even established their own cheese factory on Maroondah Highway.

Many people saw him as part of the district landed gentry but that is one thing Jim isn't. He is a quiet, modest man who loved the land and his community.

A graduate of Dookie Agricultural College, Jim is well read and ever willing to be innovative, trying new milking techniques, new cropping ideas. He travelled overseas and often bought back ideas he would try on his own farms.

I first met Jim when I was a reporter for the Lillydale Express in the late 1970s and had the job of covering council meetings. Jim was always polite and affable but could be very forceful when he felt an injustice was being done.

Jim you have made a lifelong commitment to your family and your community and we at the Lillydale & District Historical Society have always appreciated your support.

Sue Thompson President

### 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)



## Val's contribution recognised

On Saturday, April 2, more than 50 family and friends gathered at the Margaret Lewis Reserve at Coldstream for the official unveiling of the memorial stone for Val Sheehan.

Morris Maxwell from the Friends of Margaret Lewis Reserve who organised the day spoke and was followed by Val's brother Les Skate, Cr Fiona McAllister, V and the society's Vice President John Brown.

Other society members present on the day included Lorraine Smith, Joy Gothe, John, Ruby and Horst Kwijas Elizabeth Downes Philip Burton and Shirley Poulter.

Secretary Joy Gothe videoed the function and a copy has been added to our archive.



## A page of history

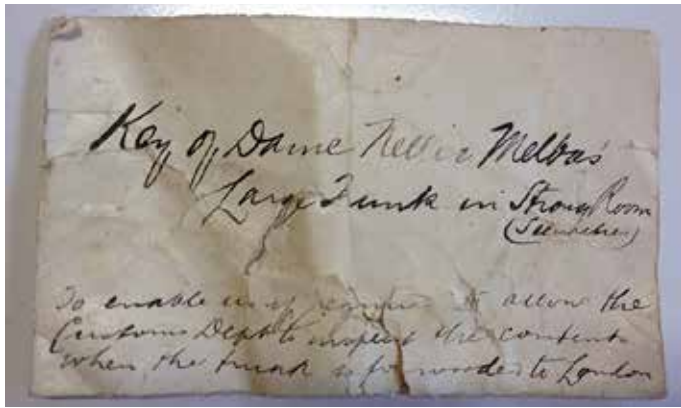
There has been much discussion about when Victoria Avenue became John Street in Lillydale.

Lillydale Shire council resolved on August 23, 1968 to change the name to John Street and the change was approved in January 1966.

Until then the section of road between Maroondah Highway and Cave Hill Road had been called Victoria Avenue and marked as such on the Lillydale Township Estate.

(Ref: Lillydale Express January 13 1966 pg 15)

## Key to one of Melba's trunk



It is amazing how far a website can reach. Each week we are receiving various Melba inquiries via both our society and Melba websites.

One from Violet Town unlocked a new area for us to explore.

“I have an envelope containing a large key from my 93 year old cousin & former banker.



“The envelope is torn, the key being heavy, but the hand writing is clear. It reads as follows:

“Key of Dame Nellie Melba's large trunk in Strong Room (securities)

To enable use if required to allow the Customs Dept to inspect the contents when the trunk is forwarded to London”

In our subsequent phone call the donor explained she was trustee for her cousin who is now in a nursing home. He was a former bank manager in Melbourne as was his father. One was with the Bank of New South Wales and the other the Commonwealth Bank.

The key was manufactured by Chubb in England.

With a little bit of research we established that Melba's bank was the Bank of New South Wales now Westpac.

We also found out that Melba was not one to travel lightly. In 1927 she returned to Australia with 76 trunks and Customs would hold up the other passengers too long if it was inspected on board, Melba was allowed to take her “bonded luggage” trunks to Coombe Cottage accompanied by a customs officer where he completed

his inspection. The cost for his time was 5/6 an hour.

The press noted that one large box contained nothing but mattresses and bedroom furnishings for the maids and was originally taken from Coombe Cottage. (*The Armidale Express* January 28, 1927 pg 5).

**Can anyone provide more information about the key?**

### Pilgrimage to the Yarra Valley

*(Reprinted Courtesy Melba Opera Trust)*

Building a foundation for an important developmental year in their careers, the 2016 scholars spent the day dedicated to Melba.

The first Mentor Program block for 2016 concluded last week, and now that scholars Daniel Carison, Bronwyn Douglass, Zoe Drummond, Timothy Newton, Michael Petrucci, Nicholas Tolputt and Shakira Tsindos are directly connected to the legacy of Dame Nellie Melba, we thought there was no better way to spend the final day of the block than with a pilgrimage to the Yarra Valley to learn more about Australia's great diva.

The first stop was to Lilydale Lawn Cemetery, the sight of Melba's memorial. Here, we were hosted by John Brown, self-proclaimed “grave keeper to the diva”, otherwise known as the caretaker enlisted by Melba Opera Trust to maintain Melba's gravesite, as set out in her will. Having lived in the area for a number of decades and having personally known Melba's granddaughter, the late Pamela, Lady Vestey, John shared anecdotes and insights into Melba's rich and glamorous life.

Our second stop was to Melba's treasured 76-acres, meaningfully named ‘Coombe Cottage’. Manager of the Coombe Estate, Daniel Johnson took the scholars on a private tour, explaining the development of the newly-opened-to-public a la carte restaurant, museum and providore ensuring the relevance of Dame Nellie Melba into the future. The scholars were extremely fortunate to be taken ‘beyond the hedge’ into Melba's cottage, a privilege known to few as it is still a private residence of Melba's family. The scholars were able to stand in Melba's music parlour and beside her own piano, often the site for musical soirees she hosted for friends. A tour of the extensive gardens followed before lunch with Daniel in the restaurant.

To round out the trip all the way from the city to the Yarra Valley, the final stop was a visit to De Bortoli Winery, our valued event partner and makers of The Melba range of wines, poignantly based on the opera for which Melba was most famous, La Bohème. Our scholars were joined by some of our benefactors who have endowed named scholarships, including John & Elizabeth Wright-Smith, Professors Joseph Sambrook & Mary-Jane Gething and Paulette & Warwick Bisley, all taken on a private tour of the winery before enjoying a wine tasting together.

As a result of the day, new scholar, mezzo-soprano Bronwyn Douglass, felt “passionate to continue to strive for excellence in all of my endeavours”. While returning scholar, counter-tenor Nicholas Tolputt, offered:

“Our ‘Melba Pilgrimage’ was the perfect way to really begin to understand the wonderful legacy that Melba Opera Trust aims to continue. As a returning scholar



*Melba Opera Trust scholars at Lilydale Cemetery.*

I had previously had the privilege of singing at Dame Melba’s beautiful home at Coombe Cottage. This trip though, was much more private and started to help us see the complex and intelligent woman behind the music.”

To read the article or learn more about the Melba Opera Trust go to: <http://www.melbaoperatrust.com.au/news/2016-scholars-on-a-melba-pilgrimage>

## Happy birthday Melba

May 19, 2016 will be the 155th anniversary of the birth of Helen Porter Mitchell later Mrs Armstrong but better known to the world as Dame Nellie Melba. Her legacy and contribution to the Australian community and music in particular, continues to this day. When she sailed to Europe in 1886 she had only letters of introduction. Thanks to the Melba Opera Trust the scholars today have mentors to help them with all facets of their careers, something Melba had to learn as her career developed.

**Sue Thompson**

## Elections 1859 style

With a Federal election due sometime this year, I decided to have a look at the early elections held in Victoria. The seat of Evelyn which encompassed Lilydale and the Yarra Valley was created in 1859 and the first representative elected that year.

One person heavily involved was an early Warrandyte and Lilydale businessman John Hutchinson who later became the Shire of Lillydale’s first Shire President and the builder and owner of the Olinda Hotel.

His diary clearly records his heavy involvement in the election. Even though the electorate was large in area, the numbers were small so every vote was vital:

**Sept 3 1859:** Out riding at Brushy Creek concerning elections. At P. Blairs & Jebbs gave papers on rolls to each.

**Sept 17:** At Brushy Creek Hotel evening & all night attending a meeting of Mr J. C. King one of our candidates for Evelyn & was well received.

**Nov 7:** Out riding at Brushy & Running Creek on Election business.

**Nov 8:** At home forenoon, at meeting in Evelyn on behalf of J.C. King Esq. one of our candidates for Evelyn. David Lithgow here.

**Nov 9:** Out riding election business at Mr Kays, had a letter from the Honorable J.C. King. Sent a letter from him to Jno. Lithgow by Dunlope.

**Nov 11:** At Brushy Creek, poling (sic) day.

	King 27	Copper 3
& at Andersons Creek	King 24	Copper 15
<b>Total</b>	<b>King 51</b>	<b>Copper 18</b>
	Majority for King 33.	

John Charles King an Irishman was born in Ireland in 1817. He arrived at Sydney in 1838 but returned home, married and returned to the Port Phillip district in 1841 and set himself up as an auctioneer and commission agent in Elizabeth Street.

When the Melbourne City Council was established in December 1842 King was appointed the first town clerk at £250 a year, a position he held until March 1851. King was chosen to visit England as the agent of the Australasian League at a salary of £600. He remained in England lecturing about the colony and returned again in 1857. He was elected the representative for Evelyn and in October he was included in William Nicholson’s cabinet as vice-president of the lands board and commissioner of public works, but in November his business failed and he resigned his portfolio and seat in parliament.

He died on January 26, 1870.

### Footnotes

(1) For the John Hutchinson story go to Gun Alley on our website and click on John Hutchinson.

(2) William Nicholson also had links with the district as he owned the land later purchased by David Mitchell on which he established his Cave Hill Quarry and farm.

### Sources:

(1) Diary of John Hutchinson.

(2) C. A. McCallum, ‘King, John Charles (1817–1870)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/king-john-charles-2308/text2989>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 26 April 2016.

**Sue Thompson**

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

and I will email a copy to you.

Back copies are also available electronically.

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## Court House Licence Negotiations

Negotiations are continuing with the Shire of Yarra Ranges over our new licence agreement and the amount of rent we can afford to pay. We anticipate all the issues including the rent payable, the installation of energy saving devices and hours of operation will be finalised by the end of May.

The finalisation of the licence will be published in the For the latest news, listing of events and our publications, go to our website at:

[http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au/events\\_lilydale\\_melba\\_yarra\\_valley.htm](http://www.lilydalehistorical.com.au/events_lilydale_melba_yarra_valley.htm) or

Google+ or Facebook and type in Lilydale Historical Society

## 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.

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