Report of the Committee 2026

I hereby present the 2026 Annual Report, representing the period from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026.

It was again a busy year of activities for EMHS. Our most significant ongoing activity is the schedule of regular evening events that we hold. These activities not only give the opportunity to hear about research on interesting aspects of local history, but they also provide regular social meetings for members of our local community.

An aspect that has been very prominent in the committee's work is the renovation of the society's website. This is something that has significant cost implications for us, and is discussed later in this report.

The Committee

It is very fortunate that we have an active and hard-working committee. There are many tasks involved in successfully running an organisation such as ours and thankfully we have many capable and willing contributors on the committee. In addition we have a band of members who help with various tasks through the year, including setting up and putting away after our regular library talks, and baking treats for the same events. Thank you all!

I should say at the outset that Sylvia Black and Jill Fenwick have indicated that they will not be re-nominating for the committee. Both were present from the earliest days of our society, and have long been key office-holders. Sylvia has been Secretary since 2000, and Jill was President for many years. Both were accorded Life Membership in 2024 and we thank them for their outstanding contributions that have made our society what it is.

Malcolm Howell has continued his great work in the role of Treasurer. Malcolm has also been a doyen of EMHS over many years, and in a number of roles, including president. In his current role Malcolm provides a steady hand with our finances and excellent guidance in legal aspects of our activities.

Barbara Paterson has kept a close eye on developments in the heritage protection area. She has kept the committee aware of proposed changes to buildings and advised on what involvement the EMHS might take in any review of such proposals.

Diane Clifford has been our membership secretary for a number of years and has overseen the growth in member numbers over that time while keeping members informed of events and maintaining membership records; it's a great credit to Di that our member numbers are so strong and that members receive such good communications about our activities.

Prof Marita McCabe has continued to be an enthusiastic and active promoter of the EMHS and strong contributor to committee deliberations, and her work in recording recollections of older long-term residents of East Melbourne has been outstanding and important. We look forward to further instalments of her in-depth interviews with local residents.

Lisette Malatesta joined the committee this year and has been a great contributor in terms of both body and soul matters; her catering assistance and organisational skills have been invaluable at our functions, and her work on newsletter editing and production and the website project have been important.

Ian Hind rejoined the committee and Ian was again a strong contributor to the decision-making of the committee, including work on the website project.

Membership

We currently have 202 financial members, and we extend a welcome to members who have joined during the past year. The strength and vitality of our membership base is a testament to the health of our organisation.

Website

We have an active website that is about to be upgraded. The site has 2433 catalogue items, including 806 WW1 personnel records, 301 building histories, 585 gallery images and 55 maps. The website generates significant regular traffic and is a valuable research tool.

Renovation of the website is a project that is a top priority of the committee at the moment. The website is a key asset of our organisation, as can be seen from the amount of items mentioned in the previous paragraph. We are carefully considering the best way forward in terms of the platform we choose, and the implications that that choice will have for the accessibility of our archive of historical material, and the ongoing costs involved in the maintenance of the site.

Activities July 2023-June 2024

The speaker at our August event was Fiona Campbell. Fiona works at the East Melbourne Library, and gave us a talk on the topic of the Sands and Macdougall directories which were produced in Victoria from the middle of the 19th century and which are very important tools in researching people's history.

At our AGM in October, Dr Anna Blainey Warner gave a presentation titled The Women's Temperance Union - Exposing Melbourne's Shameful Secrets. We were particularly grateful to Anna for coming along at short notice due to an unavoidable late cancellation.

Our Christmas drinks function was held at Bishopscourt in early December, and we are indebted to Archbishop Ric and Louie Thorpe for their generosity in making their home and grounds available to us. Ric and Louie were recently arrived residents at Bishopscourt at the time, and it was great to have the opportunity to meet them and welcome them as members of the EMHS.

In February Lisette Malatesta conducted a tour commencing in the Fitzroy Gardens and taking in significant buildings in East Melbourne. This walk was a great success and over-subscribed, and Lisette did another tour in May. We look forward to holding more of these in different areas of our suburb.

Professor Peter Tregear spoke to us at our April meeting about the book he had co-authored with Anne-Marie Forbes on a very significant person in the Melbourne musical scene in the early 20th century, Fritz Hart, a sometime resident of Grey Street, East Melbourne.

Local resident Roger Smith spoke at our June meeting about Eastern Hill, where the city meets the suburbs and where there are lots of religious worship places not far from the cathedrals of commerce in Collins Street.

Newsletter

Our newsletter is published three times a year and goes to every member electronically, and for those who prefer a printed version one is hand delivered by Committee members to local street addresses, or posted to those with a PO box or living outside the East Melbourne area.

The newsletter is an important part of our activities, and aims to provide a range of items of local historical interest. Over the last year the content of the newsletter has maintained the high level of interesting, well-researched articles that it has consistently done over the years.

Sylvia has done an outstanding job putting together material for the newsletter as well as contributing great articles on her own account.

We are very grateful for the editing and formatting skills that Lisette brings to the production of the newsletter.

In addition to our newsletter, we regularly supply articles relating to East Melbourne history to the Inner-City News newspaper, which as the name suggests circulates in the inner suburbs of East Melbourne, Carlton and Parkville.

Heritage at Risk

EMHS as a group has continued to monitor proposed planning developments within our area. This is part of EMHS's role in seeking to maintain the heritage status of East Melbourne.

In conclusion, I would like to thank our members for their continued involvement, interest and support, and look forward to another great year in 2027.