

October  
2007

# NEWSLETTER

MAY 2004

CITY OF MOORABBIN  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## STOP PRESS

Dr Graham Whitehead's much anticipated talk, titled "Murder" advertised for our October 28th Meeting, has regretfully been CANCELLED

Unfortunately, this date coincides with the official 'Re-opening of Joyce Park', and big crowds are anticipated to attend for the free entertainment between 2-4pm. As this may result in a significant increase of visitors to 'Box Cottage' on the day, it was decided at the September MHS Meeting, it would be necessary to also increase the number of Volunteers, both in 'Box Cottage' and the grounds, to assist the visitors, and ensure the safety of our artifacts.

*Post Script: (It is hoped to re-schedule Graham's talk in 2008)*

## "IN RETROSPECT" Continues:

Higinbotham and the Reshaping Political Scene of 1890's, Excerpt taken from the 'City of Moorabbin Historical Society Newsletter', *March 1963*. Author, Historian: Tom Sheehy, .

The prosperity of the 1880's carried on into the early 1890's, but was destined to fade when the land sale "bubble" burst in 1893. Yet, a lot was to happen in the first three years of the concluding decade of the 19th century. Oddly enough, they brought home to the people of Moorabbin and Brighton the politics involved in a maritime dispute, which, when May 1890 came around, had tied up every shipping port in Australia. The effect of the strike caused a reaction that became responsible for a re-arrangement in the party system of the country's political fraternity. One

of the central figures was the Brighton resident, and Chief Justice of Victoria, George Higinbotham. Another friend was Alfred Deakin, who in later years, after Federation had been agreed on, went on to become Prime Minister.

Higginbotham and Deakin had been friends for many years. Their common interest, the Liberal Party, was the basis of the friendship. The Liberal Party, was also the body in whom the trade union movement placed confidence.

Continued Overleaf



Two pioneer Labor representatives, (one was W A Trenwith, President of the Trades Hall Council), voted with the Liberals. Then came the strike, which began amongst the ships' officers, and gradually spread to allied parties.

The break between the unions and the Liberal Party came out of this when Deakin called out the troops to keep order during the strike. As Deakin had expressed his intolerance towards the strikers, Higinbotham who was watching the dispute from his judicial post, felt that he too should declare himself. This he did by sending 50 Pounds to the funds of the strikers with an assurance of more to come.

Meanwhile, Conservative Tommy Bent decided not to become involved. Bent would have realized that any action that tended to divide his opposition should be accepted as a good omen by any politician. The strange thing was that Bent was to come in for criticism from Deakin, after Deakin himself, had become a Conservative. By the same token he couldn't find words praiseworthy enough for Higinbotham, when in later years, he summed up the two Brighton—Moorabbin opponents. Deakin wrote Bent off as a go-getting, untrustworthy type of politician.

However, there was not much praise for Higinbotham at the time of the dispute as far as the politicians of the day were concerned. In fact the judge's partisanship had become an embarrassment to them. On one occasion a knighthood had been planned for him, but he insisted that no honours be placed upon him by politicians either in Melbourne, or Downing Street. His work, he claimed, was in the interest of Brighton and Moorabbin, that if any recognitions were appropriate, they should come from a local source.

Higinbotham was a sincere man with a kindly nature.

In 1892, Higinbotham's free-thinking habits, it seemed had gone too far for his own good. For in that year with the absence of a Governor in Victoria, it was taken for granted that he, as Chief Justice, would be installed as Lieutenant Governor, but instead the honour went elsewhere. The man who had been a stickler for procedure had become the victim of a departure from it. He had little to say on the matter, but the ageing Higinbotham soon became ill, and on the last day of 1892 died. He was laid to rest during the first days of 1893.

Three, out of the four great Brighton and Moorabbin politicians, had now died. Tommy Bent remained. It was strange how every time fortune or misfortune struck one of the last two, it soon struck the other. Higinbotham's death was no exception, because in a few months the land "bubble" burst. Tommy Bent became bankrupt.

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Thank You:

Many thanks to Bob Lawson for his interesting talk on the 1st WW at the September MHS meeting.

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