Joan Margaret Richmond
(1905 - 1999)
- A Fast Woman

In the history of Australian motor sport, men such as Jack Braham and Peter Brock are legend. Today we have probably all heard of Mark Webber and the current Motor GP champion, Casey Stoner. Motor sports are dominated by men. In fact more than 70 Australian women have participated in motor sports since the 1920s although their achievements are not widely known. Joan Richmond is one of these.

Joan Richmond was born into quite a privileged family in Cooma, New South Wales, in 1905 but spent most of her childhood on a farm near Melton in Victoria. She seems to have been considered a bit of a tomboy and was sent to St Catherine’s School in Toorak for ‘finishing’ though it is doubtful how successful this was!

A keen horsewoman, Joan held ambitions to become a jockey but was thwarted when women were banned from professional racing, it being considered ‘unladylike’! Instead she became a racing race driver. Her first car was a Citroen, which she purchased to drive to the Queensland - Northern Territory border to visit her brother; on her return home she began competing in hill climbs and sprints.

From small club events, Joan sought new challenges and her first major event was the 1931 Australian Grand Prix at Phillip Island when, driving a Riley, she was placed a creditable fifth on what happened to be her twentieth-six birthday.

A meeting with two Englishmen driving a Riley around the world set the next phase of Joan’s career in motion when the topic of discussion turned to the Monte Carlo Rally. This led to Joan and several friends dispatching a cable to Victor Riley in England asking him to send three cars so that they could drive overland to the starting point of the rally in Sicily. To their surprise he agreed and Joan with five others made the five-month journey via India and the Middle East to compete in the 1932 Monte Carlo Rally, Joan coming 17th overall. It was in Britain that Joan found fame. In 1932 she and her co-driver, Elsie Wisdom, won the international 1000-mile (1600 kilometres) race at the legendary Brooklands track – the first time women had won a major international motor race against male competitors. Throughout the 1930s Joan participated in several more Monte Carlo rallies and the Le Mans 24 Hour race and

• The Richmond Family Headstone at St Kilda Cemetery.

Photo: Mary Reid.

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was a regular figure on British racing tracks. Yet what seemed like a glamorous life in the fast lane had its share of hardship and sorrow with the death of her finance of just one day in a motor racing accident and the discovery that the man she was later planning to marry was in fact already married.

During World War II Joan worked for the de Havilland aircraft manufacturing organisation. Then in 1946 her mother persuaded her to return home to Australia. Her motor racing career was over and for the next 43 years of her life she lived in relative obscurity, devoting much of her time to animal welfare. She died in 1999 aged 94 and is buried in the St Kilda Cemetery. Fortunately, her achievements have now been recognised in a book published last year called ‘Joan Richmond - from Melbourne to Monte Carlo and Beyond’, based on her own diaries and audiotapes. A collection of items related to her motor racing career is now held by the National Museum of Australia.

Images from the web-site: www.joanrichmond.com

Recent Tours

Constructing the Colony - Architects, Engineers and Builders at St Kilda Cemetery

On 24 June 2012 a diverse group of people gathered at the St Kilda Cemetery on a chilly winter afternoon to find out about some of the architects and engineers who had a hand in creating Marvellous Melbourne and who were responsible for some of Victoria’s most significant nineteenth and twentieth century buildings.

Among the graves visited was that of James H Fox who established a reputation as an architect among the wealthy Western District squattocracy and who designed 13 churches in the area, Clunes town hall and court house and the Wesleyan church at Brunswick.

One of the highlights of the tour was the grave of Frederick Barnes who, with Joseph Reed, dominated the Melbourne architectural scene in the second half of the nineteenth century. They formed the company Reed and Barnes in 1862 and engaged mainly in large and complex projects as well as competitions. They were responsible for many iconic buildings in Melbourne, such as the Melbourne Town Hall, Scots Church and the Royal Exhibition building as well as St Michael’s Uniting Church in Exhibition Street, Ripponlea Estate and the Melbourne Trades Hall in Carlton. The firm still exists under the name ‘Bates Smart’ and won the competition for the design of Federation Square.

The tour also visited the grave of Sir John Warren Swanson who, together with his brother, Sir Donald Alexander Swanson, was involved in building construction. Swanson Bros became one of Melbourne’s leading building firms, specialising in masonry work. The firm built the Collins Street Assembly Hall, the City Baths, the Arts and other buildings at Melbourne University, Scotch College and the Athenaeum Club. Swanson Bros remained a family business until 1983.

Thanks to our experienced tour leader, Geoff Austin.

*Geoff Austin with his tour group in front of the Swanston Grave.

Photo: Mary Reid.
Tour For Prahran Historical Society

On Sunday 19 August ten members of the Prahran Historical Society joined Pearl Donald for a tour of the graves of former residents of Prahran.

First stop was the grave of Captain James Kelly, a fireman and soldier, whose monument depicts fire hoses, hydrants, taps and a fireman’s motif. The monument was restored and rededicated in 1991 by the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

John P.C. Ewart’s main claim to fame is the part he played in the capture of a group of bushrangers. Arriving in Sydney from Scotland in 1835, he came to Melbourne in 1837 with 500 head of cattle and became well known for his skill in handling horses. An accident lead to the nickname, ‘Hopping Jack’ because of his limp.

James Munroe, a leader of the temperance movement and Premier of Victoria, nevertheless became embroiled in questionable land practices and used his public influence to protect his interests in various banks, coffee palaces and other organisations. He sailed to England, leaving behind a public scandalised by his actions, but was back nine months later to face the insolvency court and was left penniless.

The Reverend William Moss arrived in Melbourne in 1850 and took up the position of pastor of the Prahran Congregational Church. A distinguished career followed in which he became Honorary Secretary of the Victorian Deaf and Dumb Institute for 30 years and Secretary and Supervisor of the Victorian Asylum and School for the Blind for 13 years. He also helped to found the Mechanics Institute in Prahran.

Gertrude Johnson was born in Prahran and educated at the Presentation Convent in Windsor. She became well known as an opera singer, singing with the British Opera Company during the 1920s. On her return to Australia she set about achieving her long held dream of a national theatre movement to provide training and employment for Australian performing artists. In 1972 she established the National Theatre at St Kilda.

The tour finished with a visit to the graves of the nuns who emigrated from Killarney in Ireland to establish the Presentation Convent.

* Pearl Donald leading the Prahran Historical Society tour.

Photo: Mary Reid.

Ebenezer Davies and “The Importance Of Being Educated”

Contributed by Elizabeth Hore.

Arriving with his family on board the ‘Travencore’ at Geelong in November 1849, Ebenezer Davies was one of Victoria’s earliest settlers.

Born on 17 July 1808 at Tetbury, Gloucestershire, England, the sixth child of John Davies, Congregational minister, and his wife Dorothy Anna Maria, nee Schoen, Ebenezer left home at an early age as his parents were unable to support him. Although he had little education he was able gain employment in London. In 1831 at St Clement Danes, Westminster he married Ruth Bartlett and later established a straw hat manufactory at Halstead, Essex.

In the late 1840s Ebenezer inherited an annuity of £500 from a Welsh uncle and became determined to immigrate to Australia with his wife Ruth and their three infant sons (their fourth surviving son being born in Australia). He soon established himself in Geelong society, founded a tannery on the Barwon River in the early 1850s and served as a director of the Geelong and Melbourne Railway Company. After Ruth’s death at the age of 41 following childbirth and the death of their fifth son, he married Jane Vines on 2 February 1857. He and Jane had two surviving children. Ebenezer died on 15 May 1886 aged 77 years and is buried at St Kilda Cemetery.

Although working tirelessly in the interests of Geelong and having deep religious convictions Ebenezer is recorded by his biographer R. D. Freeman as being something of a tyrant to his family, convinced that his duty to his children was only to educate them.

Succeed in this he did, by sending his sons in turn to Geelong Grammar or Geelong College. (Sir) John Mark Davies (1840-1919) became a solicitor, politician and speculator, George Schoen Davies (1841-1910) became a banker, company manager and accountant and the third immigrant son, Joseph Bartlett Davies (1842-1924) found a career as a banker, accountant and speculator.

The most notorious son was (Sir) Matthew Henry Davies, solicitor, specula-

* Ebenezer Davies’ grave at St Kilda Cemetery.

Photo: Elizabeth Hore.
Friends of St Kilda Cemetery Committee

- Kay Rowan (President),
- Mary Reid (Secretary),
- John Hulskamp (Treasurer),
- Pearl Donald,
- Glen Turnbull,
- Dorothy Lobert and
- Lyn Annetta.

Telephone 9531 6832

Friends of St Kilda Cemetery
General Tours & Meetings in 2012

- September 8 & 9 - Conquering Cancer Tours (see details on the www.foskc.org web-site)
- Sun September 23 - AGM (at St Kilda Library, at 2pm) With guest speaker Dr Simon Smith
- Tues October 9 - Seniors’ Week Tour (10am)
- Sun November 4 - All Tours’ Tour (2pm)

General tour details:
All tours of St Kilda Cemetery leave from the main entrance gates on Dandenong Road, St Kilda East.

Tour cost: $10 for adult (except where indicated). Members of the Friends of St Kilda Cemetery and children (under 18 years) are $5.

Bookings: Reservations for all tours are essential. Numbers are limited.

Book now on (03) 9531 6832 or www.foskc.org to avoid disappointment.

Tours usually run for about 90 minutes.

Tours are offered in all weathers, so please dress appropriately for the conditions. There is little shelter or shade within the cemetery. Tours proceed at a leisurely pace, and keep to the safest paths, but those who may have difficulty walking on uneven ground should use their discretion.

The Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust manages the following cemeteries:
- Brighton General Cemetery
- Bunurong Memorial Park
- Cheltenham Memorial Park
- Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery
- Dandenong Public Cemetery
- Melbourne General Cemetery
- Springvale Botanical Cemetery
- St Kilda Cemetery

Matthew was born at Geelong on 1 February 1850 and attended the Grammar School and Geelong College before matriculating at the University of Melbourne in 1869.

After being articled to his brother John in 1870, Matthew was admitted as a solicitor in the Supreme Court of Victoria in 1875. He set up practice in 1876, taking space in Eldon Chambers in Bank Place. Much of his early legal work was for Charles Henry James who was acknowledged as “Melbourne’s first land boomer”. Michael Cannon records that:

By 1877 the young solicitor had already made enough money to take a leading part in floating the Australian Economic Bank, successor to the moribund Australian European Bank.

Matthew was responsible for the building of Normanby Chambers in Melbourne’s legal precinct. But his wish for a political career soon became apparent and in 1880 he was elected to the Prahran Council in 1880, becoming mayor in 1881-1882. The following year he was elected to Parliament as the Independent member for St Kilda.

To be continued in the next edition...

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Where: St Kilda Library Community Room
150 Carlisle Street St Kilda

When: Sunday 23 September 2012 at 1:30pm

Our Guest Speaker will be:
Simon Smith, lawyer & historian.

His book ‘Maverick Litigants’, a history of vexatious litigants in Australia 1930-2008 was published in 2009.

The talk will be about Rupert Frederick Milne who was the ‘Prince of Australia’s vexatious litigants’ and who is buried in the St Kilda Cemetery. Afternoon tea will be provided.