

# History

## Ownership of Chestnut Hill

Pre 1893 Mr McPhee. His house was arguably the first to be built in the area.

1893 Mr Frederick Miller

Six roomed house of sawn and split timber, with iron roof.  
Settlement was originally called South Sassafras.

5 Acres of fruit trees.

1899

Owned by businessman Mr. T. Crook, owner of National Stores, Prahran.  
Planted the chestnut trees and set out the garden.

1908

Mr. & Mrs. Squire Kennon (see Photographs page)

1920

Chestnut Cottage was built.

1923

New house built at Chestnut Hill. Two level Californian Bungalow.

1925

Mrs. Kennon officiated at the cutting of the ribbon ceremony for the Inauguration of Kallista, a forest village.

Change of name from South Sassafras to "Kallista", (meaning "most beautiful", from the name of a Greek island, north of Crete. Now called Thera.)

The Kennon's gardener, Angelo Boroni, was a frequent winner of the Spring and Autumn Kallista Flower Show for his fruit and vegetables.

1938

Mr. J. J. Haverty

1952

Mr. Henry (see Photographs page)

Nurseryman

1959

Jack & Ivy Beer

Guest house

1968

Kenneth & Rona Easthaugh

Guest house

1974

Outreach International Church (see Photographs page)

Restored the Chestnut Hill House, built the Lodge in 1977/78 and terraced and landscaped the property.  
1988

Kevin Morley  
Chestnut Hill Marian Lodge.

Restoration done to the Chestnut Hill House and Chestnut Cottage.

Extended the Lodge to 30 beds and extended the Living Room in the Lodge.

2006

Robert & Catherine Ellis

Experience in workplace training and event management.

Restoration of Lodge and House.

The Dandenongs

Aboriginal ceremonial grounds and meeting places were located at Clematis, The Patch, Silvan, and Mt. Dandenong. Of importance were the upper Olinda Creek area, Bald Hill in the Cardinia Reservoir catchment and Monbulk. The

Wurrundjerri people inhabited the foothills, near water, where fish, game and wildfowl were abundant. The forest provided food, clothing, and shelter. The first settlers arrived in 1835 and the land surrounding the Dandenongs quickly became pastoral leasehold. Aborigines supplied squatters with fish and ducks from the waterways. They acted as guides into largely impenetrable forest where some of the tallest trees in the world were found.

## Tourism

With the advent of Puffing Billy in 1900, road improvements and the change to motor buses, tourism reached it's heyday in the 1920's, bringing brief prosperity to the many guest houses scattered throughout the hills.

## Artists & Writers

They looked to the hills from the beginning, finding the Dandenongs an ideal setting for their creativity. Before World War I, C. J. Dennis completed "The Sentimental Bloke" in a superseded horse tram at Sunnyside, Kallista, where others of similar tastes gathered in this original accommodation. Monbulk was a second home for Mrs Aeneas Gunn (Author of "We of the Never Never") who did much of her writing there. Rose Charman's Cottage in Emerald was the venue for another group of writers. Sir Arthur Streeton in Olinda and Tom Roberts in Kallista were the best known of many artists who frequented the hills from the 1920's.

## Conservation

The battle continues as it has done for 150 years, to maintain a balance between preserving the natural environment and the requirements of industry and rural living. The diverse wildlife that inhabits the remaining forest reserves depends on maintenance of bush corridors in private hands.

## Kallista

Fires have swept through Kallista as elsewhere in the hills, leaving few traces of early settlement in the area. Timber fellers came first in the early 1850's, following down the creeks where the mightiest trees grew. The stumps of some of these were big enough for a family to live in. Sherbrooke Forest today is all regrowth. It was possible for early settlers in the trackless bush to lose themselves, even between the bark hut and the creek that provided their water supply. One stump beside the track from Belgrave became a meeting place where a settler left an individual stone as he passed by. If he did not return to collect it, his neighbours would be alerted, and a search would be organised for him. A recreation of this symbol of the past stands opposite the Kallista Primary School.

Artist Tom Roberts' studio still stands on private property, and at the top of Tom Roberts Road, the subject of one of his paintings can be seen; the Pink Cottage, restored after being crushed by a falling tree. In the early 1920's the school hall was built.

Acknowledgement:

With thanks to Dorothy Williams (writer and local historian) for the engrossing chats.

Suggested Reading:

Monbulk

Living in the Dandenongs

A Social History

Author-Dorothy Williams

A Village in the Forest

A Story of Kallista

Authors-Alec Reid, Betty Hotchin, Yvonne DeLacy

Story of the Dandenongs

Author-Helen Coulson