



ST KILDA "TIMES"

St Kilda Historical Society Newsletter Issue No 223 December 2017 www.stkildahistory.org.au

SKHS Collection



The Skaters of St Moritz: Pat and Graham Argue

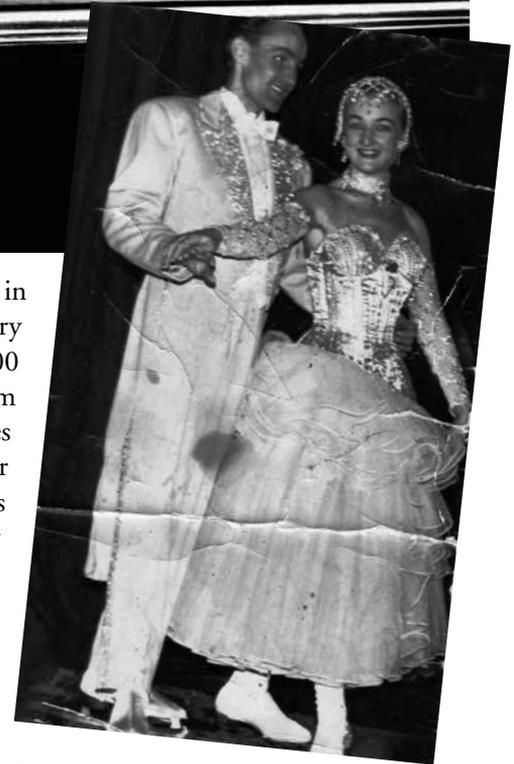
From the moment 13-year old Pat Longden stepped onto the ice at St Moritz, her goal was to be a figure skater. She had learnt to roller skate in Broken Hill, but when she moved to Robe Street, St Kilda, it was the ice that fascinated her.

Pat would often pause outside the St Moritz ice skating rink to smell the cold air and imagine what it would be like inside. Her aunt bought her a second-hand pair of skates and her mum's new partner, a season's ticket. "Probably to get me out of the house," she jokes. If that was the case, it worked. Pat went every night, skating round and around with ease and grace that came naturally. She loved the feel of the ice. "Ice-skating was quite different to roller skating. It was more fluid; the skates would do the work."

She took lessons. Pat's first teacher was Mardi Kendall and then Wendy Lee, "the daughter of Harry Jacobs who staged the pre-movie performances at the Palais Theatre down the road," she explains. Committed and talented, it wasn't long before Pat achieved her silver medal in figure skating.

Pat remembers St Moritz as the centre of the social life of the 1940s/50s in St Kilda. Ice-skating was already a popular social activity when St Moritz Ice Palace opened in 1939. Quickly the new ice rink became a place where young people met and courted. It was also where, during the war years, visiting soldiers and sailors would come to unwind.

Figure staking, in particular, was very popular. The 9.00 pm and 10.00pm Dancing Closures brought together the figure skaters and the ice hockey players, thanks to Canadian coach, Ross Carson, who insisted his men join the dancing because "it was good for their edge".



Pat and Graham in Sonja Henie's *Holiday on Ice* Pairs 1956.

"Many couples met at St Moritz," Pat recalls. "If you liked someone, you would skate next to them. You would skate all night with whomever you fancied. Ice hockey player, Lindsay Fox, met his wife, Paula, skating at St Mortiz."

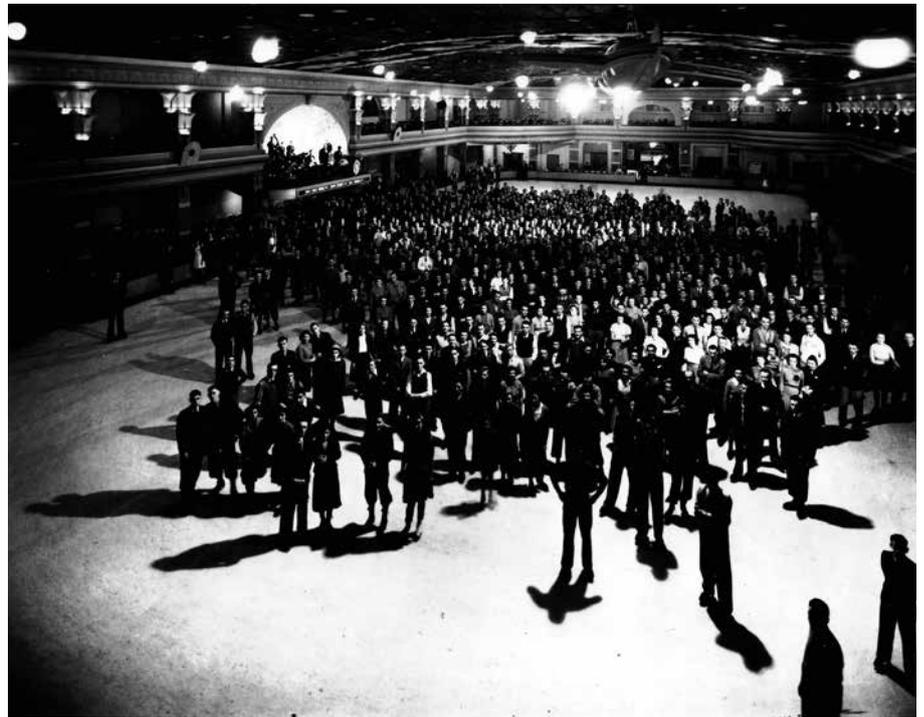
St Kilda's first female Mayor, Elaine Miller (1982-1983), met her husband Rob Miller at St Moritz in the 1950s. She was a councillor of the City of St Kilda between 1976 and 1990, and Mayor again in 1987-88.

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And Pat Longden met her future husband, Graham Argue, there in 1947 when she was 16 and he 18. Graham would become an ice hockey legend, Pat a celebrated ice show skater and choreographer.

By the age of 18 Pat was teaching ice-ballet exercises and, in particular, posture, to young girls at St Moritz. "If you're a girl taking up skating," she told *The Sun* in July 1949, "you should pay special attention to your carriage," and she stressed that dancing on ice requires hard regular practice. Under Wendy Lee's direction they produced an ice show at St Moritz every Christmas, including one with Swedish skater, Freddy Olsen. "We danced together to the song I do like to be beside the Seaside," Pat recalls.



St Moritz Skaters 1939 – SKHS Collection

And then David Martin brought Armand Perren's *Ice Follie 1950* to Australia – the first ice show to tour in a decade. It opened at His Majesty's Theatre in Melbourne on 8 April, followed by a stint at St Kilda's Palais Theatre in June, before travelling to Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane and Sydney. *The Adelaide Advertiser* reported with excitement that "forty international skating champions from Austria, Belgium, England, France, Italy, Holland, Norway, Hungary, Switzerland and Australia will appear in the spectacular revue *Ice Follies of 1950*" (14 June, 1950, p.10)

Pat auditioned at the Melbourne Glaciarium in City Road, South Melbourne and was one of only six Australian skaters chosen for the tour. "I remember that audition," she smiles "because somebody stole my shoes!" The follies tour ran for almost three years, breaking all previous Australian entertainment records.



Pat dancing with Freddy Olsen at St Moritz *Ice Review*, 1948.

When Pat married Graham at Christ Church, St Kilda in 1952 he converted to ice dancing, albeit briefly.

Graham had played senior ice hockey for the Demons (1948-49) and was a member of the first Australian Ice Hockey Team to defeat the European All-Stars (Raiders) 4-3 in 1948. He moved to the Blackhawks in 1950 and to the Pirates in 1951. He helped Victoria win the 1951 Goodall Cup (3-1), scoring one of its goals.

Pat and Graham performed together across Australia and New Zealand in Armand Perren's *International Ice Review*,



Pat on UK tour of *White Horse Inn on Ice*, London 1954.

followed by national tour of *Hot Ice*. In 1954 they sailed for England, arriving with just 10 pounds. They auditioned successfully for the UK tour of *White Horse Inn on Ice*, but left within a few months for Gothenburg, Sweden to join *Holiday on Ice* with Sonja Henie.

The highlight of Pat's figure skating career was skating with Sonja, whose movie star photo had graced the marble steps landing at St Moritz and had been an inspiration to a generation of young St Kilda ice dancers.

The Argues toured Europe and then South Africa with Sonja for almost three years, until Pat returned to Melbourne to have their first baby, Greg. When Graham finished the tour, they settled in Elwood and had two more children, David and Michelle, while continuing their passion for ice-skating.

Pat skated in the St Moritz ice ballets devised by Nancy Burley and televised live on ABC TV from 1957 to 1962/3. Graham pursued his ice-hockey career. He played a total of 123 games in the Ice Hockey League, was involved in assembling the Demons victorious team of 1977, and instrumental in establishing the old-timer's league, the Melbourne Nite Owls.

In July 1971 the Argues opened their own skating rink in Oakleigh South – the Olympic Ice Skating Centre. There, Pat directed and choreographed thirteen ice revues with world champions, such as Olympians Donald Jackson, Scott Hamilton, Dianne de Leeu, and a cast of two hundred skaters. The Argues also directed and choreographed mobile ice shows for major shopping centres and for the Moomba Festival, as well as shows at the Sidney Myer Music Bowl for the Victorian Arts Centre.

Graham died in 1993. Pat's fondest memory is of a moonlit night at Mt Buller, a few years earlier, skating alone with Graham on a public rink they had set up, by invitation, on the tennis court of the Grollo family ski lodge. "It was a clear, cold night. We skated round and around for ages under the full moon. Just the two of us." ■

By Krystyna Kynst

With thanks to Tim Swampy, St Kilda Images and Stories.

Did you skate at St Moritz? Share your stories and photos on our Facebook page.



Pat on tour in South Africa with Sonja Henie's *Holiday on Ice* 1956.

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COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT 2017-2018

President: Jennifer Stone
Vice President: Helen Halliday
Acting Secretary: Phillip Stewart
Treasurer: Elizabeth Burns

Ordinary Members:
Maureen Walker
Peter Tapp
Ken Norling



OUR NEW LOGO

Our revamped logo embraces the old City of St Kilda logo, kindly donated to the St Kilda Historical Society by the now City of Port Phillip.

St Kilda Historical Society (SKHS)
Established 1970
PRESERVING THE PAST TO
ENRICH THE FUTURE



SKHS thanks Port Phillip City for its ongoing support and assistance

The St Moritz Skating Lady

The St Moritz neon skating lady is enclosed in a clear box. She is stored in the basement of the St Kilda Library, awaiting her new home in the foyer of the City of Port Phillip's office, across the road. Plans are being prepared to reinforce the hanging wall for the weight of the neon sign and its enclosure. When installed the Ice Skating Lady will be lit up permanently, powered by the sun from the building's rooftop solar panels.



The St Moritz Skating Ladies reunite in the basement of the St Kilda Library. Pat Argue 2017.



Remembering Carlo Catani

(1852 - 1918)

Next year we remember Carlo Catani whose vision has defined St Kilda's foreshore for over 100 years.

Carlo Catani was the Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department, Victoria. As engineer and landscaper, his influence stretches across Melbourne (Alexandra Avenue and its Gardens, Elwood Canal) and regional Victoria (Mt Buffalo, Koo Wee Rup). However, it is most felt in St Kilda where, as part of the Foreshore Committee, he created our famous strolling district and leisure precinct, with its open lawns, sloping pathways, lava rock walls, planted gardens and a grand European promenade with spectacular views.

"One man's name is indissolubly linked with the beautification of the St Kilda foreshore. No description of the beauties of the foreshore at St Kilda can hereafter be complete, without mention of the creator of its charming shorescapes, Carlo Catani". (Cooper, John Butler, *History of St Kilda* Vol II, p 228)

2018 will mark 100 years since Catani's death (20 July). In November

the Society attended the first meeting of interested organisations (including Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, VicRoads, Museo Italiano and the City of Port Phillip) to plan commemorative activities that will showcase his legacy and pay tribute to his style.

The Society's plans are already well advanced, with:

Catani Talks 2018

Heritage architect and Lake Ward Councillor, David Brand, will take us on a photographic journey to explore the Italian influences on Catani's work.

Author and historian, Daniela Volpe, will speak about Catani's life and his journey to Australia, based on her book "From Tuscany to Victoria: the life and work of Pietro Baracchi, Carlo Catani, Ettore Checchi."

Catani Exhibitions 2018

In July we will mount a Catani in St Kilda exhibition showcasing photos

from our collection, as well as photos held by the Heritage Centre and the State Library of Victoria. Also, in the pipeline is a possible collaboration with the Museo Italiano in Carlton to honour Catani's work across Victoria.

Catani Online

We'll have a dedicated page on our website and we'd love to hear your stories and feature your photos of Catani's St Kilda. What do you love (or not) about his legacy? Do you stroll along the Esplanade? Sit on the grass slopes? Play in Catani Gardens? Check the time on Catani's clock? Meander down to the beach through the landscaped pathways below the clock tower? Watch the sun set from the Catani Arch? What is your favourite Catani feature? ■

Send in your images and stories or share on our Facebook page and Pinterest.





The Esplanade c 1960s - SKHS Collection

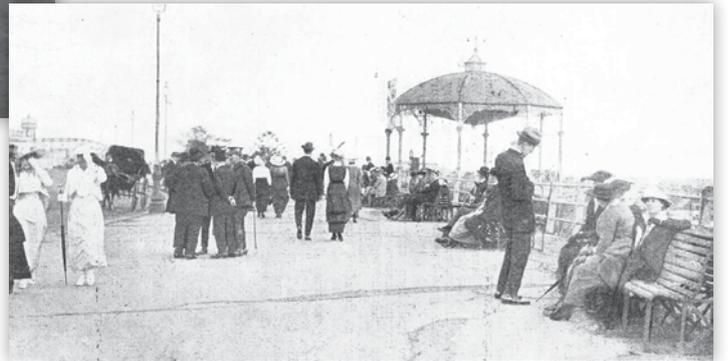


Landscaped Pathways c1920s - SKHS Collection



“He saw the possibilities to which others were blind”

Mr H. O. Allan, secretary of the Foreshore Committee, Cooper Vol II, p 228



The Esplanade, c1918 - SKHS Collection



Above: The Esplanade Retaining Wall, c1920s (late) - Cooper II, p 150
Left: The Esplanade Retaining Wall 2017.



St Kilda foreshore c1930s (late) - SKHS Collection



Above: Grass Slopes c1940s - SLV image H32492/1974
Left: Grass Slopes 2017.

An eventful year

The St Kilda Historical Society has completed a successful and eventful year, culminating in our Annual General Meeting held at Alliance Francaise St Kilda, which featured a fascinating talk by David Dufty on code breakers working in our area around St Kilda during World War II.

There were many achievements for the Society this year. There has been major work done during the year to update the Society's website. This has included efforts to make it more accessible to the general public, by streamlining current log-ins, and removing some pay walls.

Work has also been done to improve the Newsletter, which is very ably overseen by Krystyna Kynst, and includes a group of much-valued contributors.

The Society has provided a program of interesting events and talks for members and the general public during the year, and will continue to do so. We also built on, and brought to fruition, successful projects from the previous year, including Krystyna Kynst's valuable research on the **Esplanade Hotel Campaign**, – available on the Society's website and as an **iBook**, – and also **Dr Judith Buckrich's** much anticipated, recently released book on the history of Acland Street.

This year, also, we joined the social media conversation with our very own Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter accounts.

Plans for the year ahead are well under way. There have been significant changes in the executive of the Society's committee.

Jennifer Stone, who joined the committee earlier in the year, has accepted the position of President. She has lots of energy, and fresh ideas, and this is already having a positive effect on the direction in which we are moving, for the Society to be relevant and effective in the community. She has already set us up on Social Media.

Our long term Secretary Dorothy Lobert has recently resigned, and her shoes will be very difficult to fill. She has ably fulfilled this role for twelve years, and will be much missed, but we trust that she will enjoy her well-earned rest after these years of diligence and hard work. Her position will be temporarily occupied by Phillip Stewart, who will be working with several other committee members to keep things running smoothly.

We were also very sorry to lose our Treasurer Janet Beeston, a Heritage Architect, whose work load in her full time job has increased, leaving less time than she wished to give to the Society. Like Dorothy, Janet will also be much missed, but her level headedness and hard work have been much appreciated over the years.

Our new Treasurer will be Elizabeth Burns, who has been our busy and hard working president in the last year. Helen

Farewell and Thank you



Dorothy Lobert



Janet Beeston

Halliday, who was recently awarded the OAM for services to the community of Port Phillip, will continue on the committee as a major force for ideas and change and innovation. Ken Norling will continue in his valuable role as website manager, working with Peter Tapp, bringing in changes to improve efficiency and accessibility.

We also welcome a new member to the committee, Maureen Walker, a local historian, who has contributed to the Society for many years, especially in putting up our displays in the foyer of the St Kilda library. Maureen's excellent history of the St Kilda Uniting Church, Campaigns, Causes and Commitments, was recently published to deserved acclaim. Maureen is very familiar with the Society's collection, housed at the St Kilda Library, and she is the ideal person to assess and curate it.

For the year ahead, priority will be given to the ongoing updating of the web site, and efforts to make it more efficient and user friendly. With Peter Tapp, we will explore creating local history projects for primary and secondary school students. We will also work on creating interactive components on the website. As we have over the years, we will continue to seek out, support and develop local history projects, and to foster interest in the built history of the city. We will revisit and support the creation of an app by Peter Tapp, which will give information on many and varied places in St Kilda. We will also work to form links with other history groups in the City of Port Phillip. Maureen Walker, as mentioned earlier, will work to review, assess and rationalise the Society's collection.

Our new, revitalised committee is looking forward to the year ahead, and we also look forward to members of the Society participating and contributing to our activities and events in this coming year. ■

By Phillip Stewart



Protecting our built heritage

Our current pressing project is to convince the City of Port Phillip to commission a new Heritage Review of the former City of St Kilda area, in particular St Kilda Hill. Development is currently putting massive pressure on heritage buildings and precincts. We have recently seen this in the demolition of the 1853 Greyhound Hotel, which astonishingly had no heritage protection.

In our letter to the Mayor and Councillors, we raised concerns that the last review is now out of date, inadequate, and in many instances inaccurate. Our area has a rich building history that deserves coding and citations in line with current standards for heritage review. We have offered our assistance to provide photographic and other information from our collection

and we see it as an opportunity to involve the community, including running workshops during the review/s.

Areas most in need of updating:

Major Precincts

HO5 – St Kilda Hill

HO7 – St Kilda, Elwood, Balaclava, Ripponlea

HO8 – Elwood (Glen Huntly Road)

Smaller precincts

HO315 – Inkerman Street (East)

HO316 – Carlisle Street (East)

HO317 – Hotham Street, Balaclava

HO318 – Brighton Road, Elwood ■

Our own ‘Bletchley Park’

In October, Canberra based author David Dufty entertained us with stories about secret code breakers working in our neighbourhood during World War II.

Victoria Barracks in St Kilda Road and the art deco Monterey in Queens Road opposite Albert Park, housed our very own ‘Bletchley Park’ (the famous British WWII code-breakers headquarters). The sophisticated skills of the code-breakers, many of whom were women, played a vital role in the battles of Midway, Milne Bay, the Coral Sea, Hollandia, and Leyte. Their secret work changed the course of the war in the Pacific, including bringing down the Japanese bomber carrying the commander-in-chief of Japan’s naval fleet, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. ■



David Dufty in conversation with Carmel Shute about his new book *The Secret Code Breakers of Central Bureau*.
Photo: Krystyna Kynst



Carmel and David. Photo: Jennifer Stone

Acland Street Launches into History



Audience at the St Kilda Army and Navy Club. Photo: Carmel Shute

Judith Buckrich's eagerly awaited history of Acland Street is out! *Acland Street: The Grand Lady of St Kilda* was launched at the St Kilda Army and Navy Club (in Acland Street, of course) on 23 November 2017, by St Kilda identity and Rockwiz host, Brian Nankervis, in front of a 200-strong cheering crowd.

St Kilda Historical Society has supported Judith's project from the beginning, awarding her a \$3,000 seeding grant, and sponsoring her to secure a further \$5,000 from City of Port Phillip grant program.

The lavishly-illustrated, hardcover book explores the history of Acland Street since it became St Kilda's first named street in 1842, taking its name from Thomas Dyce Acland, the owner of the schooner *Lady of St Kilda* which gave its name to the suburb.

The book is available locally at Readings in Acland Street and via publisher ATOM website. ■

Judith Buckrich.
Photo: Carmel Shute



Brian Nankervis.
Photo: Carmel Shute



Proud Mum, Erika Buckrich. Photo: Carmel Shute