



Christmas section

Growing up in Surrey Hills: Christmas 1960

Gill Bell

The north wind is tossing the leaves . . .

THE childish voices drift from the classroom opposite. This will be our grade next year. In our Grade four room we are busy making paper chains to decorate the room. We concentrate on cutting the pastel-coloured paper streamers to length and glueing the loops of chain together. Mr Sutherland pins the finished chains round the room and we admire our handiwork.

Outside in the school playground, swirls of yellowish dust drift on the warm breeze, and the leaves of the eucalypts release their pungent scent. Soon we will be ushered into the Great Hall to watch a film. It is to be *Bush Christmas*. We have seen it before but we have a high tolerance for repetition. We anticipate the scene when the children try eating snake for Christmas dinner. It is our cue to shriek in delighted horror.

The movie starts. We watch as the children are released from school for the summer and race to their lift home: not a car or even a bicycle, but a horse for each child. The flickering grey and white images on the screen and the jaunty music somehow evoke an idyllic Australian country town in high summer.

After the film comes to a satisfying ending, we return to our classroom to farewell our teacher and classmates for the summer. It seems very poignant to me now that we are never again to meet in the same place or in the same group.

However, as we say our goodbyes, we are full of anticipation. Shouldering our empty satchels, we set off for home through the sleepy suburban streets.

On a secret signal cicadas begin their exuberant shrieking. The air seems to vibrate with the sound. The occasional red flowering gum street tree makes a sumptuous scarlet display. The summer gardens we pass are full of colour. There are pink and purple fuchsia bells hanging in clusters. Lavender and rosemary give off fragrance in the hot sun, while in shady corners hydrangeas bear extravagant clusters of pink flowers. The air is full of fragrance and the

(Continued on [page 3](#))





CONTENTS

(Click on article to navigate to it)

Growing up in Surrey Hills: Christmas 1960	1
Shop Local this Christmas	3
Events, exhibitions and entertainments	4
Box Hill's Christmas Appeal	6
Christmas at Uniting East Burwood	7
How to make gravy (using chemistry)	7
Santa's special delivery	8



Germany – Hanging Advent calendars

Advent, meaning “to come”, begins four Sundays before Christmas. Gerhard Lang began mass printing paper advent calendars in the early 20th century with illustrations attached to a piece of cardboard with doors to view images underneath.

Colombia – Noche de las Velitas *(Night of the Little Candles)*

On 7 December night, Colombia honours Mary and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception with a celebration of light. Colombians illuminate their homes and streets with millions of white and coloured velas (candles) in patterned paper lanterns.

Ethiopia – Christmas on 7 January

Following a guiding star, three wise men travelled to Bethlehem “from the East” to pay homage to the infant Jesus. It’s thought that the magi came from Asia, Europe and Ethiopia. Today, Ethiopians following the Julian calendar celebrate Christmas on 7 January.

Mexico – Gifting poinsettia

When a Mexican girl who’d nothing to offer the baby Jesus but a bunch of weeds deposited them, they burst into bright red flowers shaped like the star of Bethlehem. They are known as the Flores de Noche Buena, or Flowers of the Holy Night, and are synonymous with Christmas.

Guatemala – La Quema del Diablo *(Burning of the Devil)*

At sunset on 7 December, the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Guatemalans gather in towns and villages to burn a devil’s effigy to cleanse their homes of evils and misfortunes. Today communities gather in plazas at 6pm sharp and light a bonfire to burn the devil, often a piñata.

Rome – Midnight mass

In the 5th century when the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore was built, Pope Sixtus III instituted a Midnight Mass, a tradition that spread worldwide to many Christian countries.

Acknowledgement of country



Independent Community News Group Incorporated acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation, Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waters of the Eastsider News focus area, and pays respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

To learn more about the rich culture and traditions of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, explore their website at www.wurundjeri.com.au

Growing up in Surrey Hills: Christmas 1960

Continued from page 1

sun is warm on our backs as we walk confidently into the future stretching before us.

The very next day, Saturday, is one of the most exciting events of the year: the Christmas party given by our father's company, Challingsworth, in Burnley. The Challingsworth Works Christmas Party deserves capital letters!

In the afternoon our family piles into our green Zephyr to make our way to St Bartholomew's church hall in Burnley St near Challingsworth. Our little brother is cuddled on Mum's lap in the front seat. This is not yet considered a crime! We are wearing our Sunday best; Dad has on a sports jacket and tie, and Mum is wearing a full-skirted cotton frock and a Sunday hat.

We stop at the dark red brick church and take our seats in the hall, which is echoing with the excited chatter of many boys and girls. There will be games and food, then Christmas carols in these innocent days.

We feast on fairy bread, chocolate crackles, lamingtons and – an unparalleled treat – soft drink! However, the most exciting part is still to come. As we take our seats again, we hear the distant jingle of bells . . . and can that be the sound of hooves? We crane around to the back of the hall and catch a glimmer of light in the gloom. Then Father Christmas himself appears, bearing a lantern. He makes his way to the front of the hall. We are awestruck. An assistant begins to call out the name of each child in turn. It is a long list. In these years of post-war baby boom we are many, but Challingsworth is a generous employer.

'Gillian Craig!' Father Christmas hands me a squishy wrapped parcel with my name written on it. It contains a fat felt bunny. I love it!

As we drive home, I rest my hot forehead against the car window. I am utterly content. Magic has happened here tonight, and now the whole of summer stretches before us.

Shop Local this Christmas

Sal Dugan

THE 2024 Deloitte retail holiday report tells us that on average each consumer will spend just over \$1000 during the Christmas holiday season. That's a fair whack when you think about it. But where is it to be spent? The Internet? Massive shopping plazas? Let's hope not, well at least not exclusively.

With so many wonderfully diverse strip shopping centres in our readership area, we have a fabulous choice not only to shop local, but to acquire an array of gifts and plenty of Christmas fodder without having to waste fuel and energy traversing the city or just heading to the CBD. Strip shops offer fabulous greengrocers, delis, butchers, fishmongers, gift shops, newsagencies that these days stock more cards and gift items than newspapers and magazines, the odd antique market for something novel, op shops for something interesting and inexpensive. Some strips boast boutique clothing stores, patisseries, specialist confectionary shops, etc.

There is plenty of choice close by, so do remember the precious existence of the local strip shops when you're planning Christmas, summer barbies, New Year parties and holidays.

The strip shops that come quickly to my mind are High Street Kew, Glenferrie Road, Auburn Road, Belmore



Road, Whitehorse Road Balwyn, Union Road, Surrey Hills, Maling Road, Canterbury, Canterbury Road Blackburn South, Hamilton Street, Mont Albert. I'm sure there are others near you.

Please support them, for without your support they could easily disappear! And that, I reckon, would be tragic.





Events, exhibitions and other entertainments

Saturday 30 November from 11am to 2:30pm Koorie Kristmas Market

MURNONG Gathering Place at 100 High Street Glen Iris is holding a Koorie Kristmas Market on Saturday 30 November, from 11am to 2:30pm.

All stall holders are First Nations creators and artists, with goods on sale from Aboriginal artworks, jewellery, candles and melts, through to pokerwork decorated hats, clap sticks and boomerangs.

There will be a cooking demonstration with indigenous ingredients by Blake and Beau from Mullum Creations, and activities from Susatnative, the Indigenous Enterprise offering holistic solutions for sustainable development.

Come along and pick up some handy Kristmas gifts! Murnong First Peoples' Gathering Place was established to provide a safe and secure place for First Peoples in the Boroondara and surrounding areas in the inner east part of Melbourne to meet and enjoy each other's company. Murnong in the centre's title meant yam daisy, and referred to the food that was the staple nourishment of the area's Indigenous people before settlers arrived with sheep and cattle and endangered the plant.



The gathering place also gives non-Aboriginal people in the community an opportunity to learn and understand the histories, cultures and issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Within the gathering space, the Wominjeka Garden is open to the community every day, as well as the Murnong Gallery open on Fridays and Saturdays.

If you want to find out more or have any enquiries about the Gathering, contact Uncle Glenn Loughrey at 0418 911 714.

Saturday 7 December from 10am to 1pm North Balwyn traders put the Merry into Christmas



THIS festive season The Village North Balwyn is planning to delight families, visitors and shoppers of all ages with a mini street fair on Saturday 7 December from 10am-1pm.

Eastsider News November 2024

The shopping strip located from 60-93 Doncaster Road North Balwyn will come alive with fabulous Christmas promotions from the more than 55 traders as well as lots of free family fun for everyone to enjoy.

Santa will be roving the strip giving out lollies to everyone. The Christmas spruiker will be lighting up the mini fair with his music and engaging chats with shoppers and our traders.

There will be face painters ready to decorate children's faces with wonderfully artistic designs that will delight children and give parents lots of opportunities to take photos of their children's face artwork.

The Amazing Mr Twist is going to be creating amazing balloon creations to give out to all families. Mark Saturday 7 December 10am-1pm in your calendars and check out all the totally free family fun at North Balwyn Village.

North Balwyn Village is certainly putting the Merry into your festive season on Saturday 7 December.



Tuesday 10 December

Probus Mitcham Nunawading Christmas Lunch

Chris Summers

AS time flies, we are approaching the Festive Season and celebrations are underway.

Christmas Lunch

Probus is celebrating Christmas with lunch at the Canterbury International Hotel in Forest Hill on Tuesday 10 December.

If you would like to attend to see what we do, please contact the President Gerry Cross on 0418 130 499. This function might encourage you to join our group and you would be most welcome.

Join in our many activities

Over the past two months members have enjoyed many activities. The photography group walked the streets of Fitzroy and Collingwood snapping many sites be they older houses, public housing, street scenes and food sources – then enjoyed lunch at one of these venues.

The Monday coffee group continues to meet at Gourmet Girl in Laburnum. The film group meet monthly at the Balwyn Cinema and then lunch – food is always on the menu. The Bird Group only meet twice a year in Autumn and Spring and walk the Blackburn Creeklands observing and counting birds and are led by bird experts.

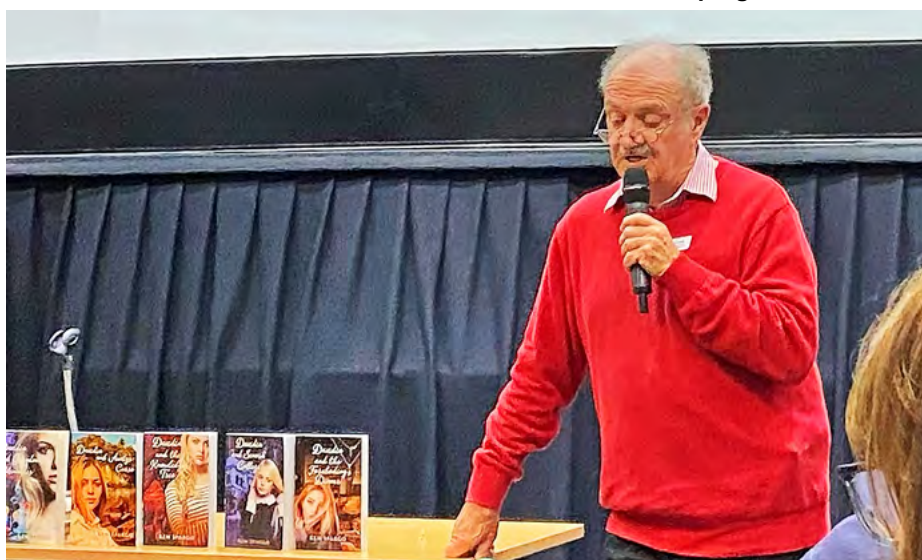
Our October speaker was our own member, Ken Spargo – the

Accidental Author. Ken is the writer of many books – Stumped, Double Bougey and a series about Davidia. The November speaker is planned to be Peter Smith of television fame.

If you are interested in attending any activity or perhaps joining our group, please contact our President Gerry Cross on 0418 130 499 or our Secretary Dale Perkins on 0427 967 855. Go to our website <https://www.probusouthpacific.org/microsites/mitchamnunawading/Welcome> for more information on the group.

On behalf of the Committee of this great Probus Group, I wish all readers a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

Ken Spargo and his books



Holy Trinity
the Anglican parish for Surrey Hills & Mont Albert

Service of Lessons and Carols

Sunday 15th December at 7pm
Cnr. Union Road and Montrose Street, Surrey Hills 3127

Readings, carols and music celebrating the birth of Christ led by the Holy Trinity Choir with Guest Baritone Barry Fry.

Favourites to sing including:
Once in royal David's city
Silent Night
We three kings
Hark the herald angels sing

Light refreshments follow in Trinity Hall.

holyltrinity.sh

Treasures and Tastes at Trinity
FOOD, PLANT & CRAFT MARKET - SURREY HILLS

CHRISTMAS MARKETS

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 16 & SATURDAY DECEMBER 21
9AM - 1PM AT HOLY TRINITY SURREY HILLS



Meet the makers, bakers and growers at our special Christmas markets! Browse the indoor & outdoor stalls for food & gifts for the festive season. Go into the draw to win a \$30 voucher with every purchase over \$20 and drop by the Treasures Cafe or BBQ. The kids will love the free Christmas activities at the kids craft table. See you there!

Treasures and Tastes at Trinity
3rd Saturday of the month (except Jan)
Phone: 9890 2165
Email: treasuresandtastes@gmail.com
Facebook: [TreasuresAndTastesAtTrinity](https://www.facebook.com/TreasuresAndTastesAtTrinity)
Instagram: [@TreasuresTastesTrinity](https://www.instagram.com/TreasuresTastesTrinity)

Find us at Holy Trinity, 177 Union Rd, Surrey Hills

www.treasurestastesattrinity.com.au

Box Hill's Christmas Appeal

WITH Christmas fast approaching there are families here in our own community who cannot afford some of the things we can often take for granted. Each year, Eastern Emergency Relief provide essential food hampers and support to needy local families. You can help by donating any of the suggested items listed below:

Non-perishable food items:

Tinned tuna, salmon, sardines and ham • Pasta sauces and pasta • UHT (long life) milk • Breakfast cereals • Muesli bars, breakfast bars • Baked beans, soup, curries, pastas (non-perishable) • Biscuits, teabags, instant coffee, Milo • Tinned fruit and vegetables • Rice, instant noodles • Baby food • Small jars of vegemite, honey, peanut butter, Nutella & jam • Christmas puddings, biscuits and tarts (non-perishable) • Custard powder • Chocolates and confectionery.

Toiletries:

Toothpaste & toothbrushes • Toilet paper • Soap • Deodorant • Shampoo & Conditioner • Nappies.

Items can be dropped off at Paul Hamer's office at 24 Rutland Road, Box Hill (during business hours) by 5.00pm on Friday 6 December. Any kind donation, however large or small, will make an enormous difference to a local family



Christmas at Uniting East Burwood

Lorraine James

AT Uniting East Burwood, it is evident that 2024 has presented great challenges across the community. Some people who have never had to ask for assistance before have needed to access welfare services in order to cope with financial stress.

For Uniting East Burwood, December is always an especially busy time. In addition to the ongoing work of Emergency Relief and Family Services, for over 20 years an extra effort has been made for the Christmas Hamper Project.

Approximately 200 personalized hampers of food and gifts are assembled, for distribution to those who need some extra help to feel some of the atmosphere of Christmas. This has been possible in no small part to the community support that has contributed food, gifts and

money to help fill the hampers. We are again seeking to ensure that 2024 can be a Happy Christmas for the people for whom we care.

Our hampers are filled with food, both regular and festive, and gifts for children up to age 11 and for adults. Donations of money allow staff to purchase extra supplies, as well as items for teenage packs, such as venue passes.

Uniting East Burwood is at 220 Burwood Highway, Burwood East Vic 3151. It is open Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from 9am to 2pm, but can be contacted every day from 9am to 5pm, on 9803 3400.

Lorraine James is Secretary East Burwood Partnership Committee



How to make gravy (using chemistry)

Nathan Kilah, Senior Lecturer in Chemistry, University of Tasmania

‘GRAVY Day’ is a relatively new date in the Australian calendar. Paul Kelly’s song *How to Make Gravy* tells the story of a prisoner (Joe) writing to his brother on December 21. Joe laments missing the family Christmas celebrations and asks who will make gravy for the roast lunch in his absence.

While a roast may not be everyone’s idea of the perfect [Christmas feast](#), ‘Gravy Day’ does give the opportunity to discuss the chemistry involved in making gravy – a thickened sauce made from drippings collected from roasted meats.

Give my love to Angus (beef?)

Roasting meat sets off a cascade of chemical reactions, producing myriad new flavour chemicals. More than 1,000 flavour compounds have been identified in roasted meats.

Each chemical gives its unique characteristics to the taste and smell of the finished roast. The chemical *12-methyltridecanal* helps give roast beef its “beefy”

Eastsider News November 2024

flavour, while the sulfur-containing compound *2-methyl-3-furanthiol* is more often found in roast chicken.

This is an extract of an article first published in *The Conversation*, December 21, 2023. To read the complete article, please go [The Conversation website here: https://theconversation.com/how-to-make-gravy-using-chemistry-219589](https://theconversation.com/how-to-make-gravy-using-chemistry-219589)



Santa's special delivery

Australia Post unwraps a new way to send Santa Mail

Australia Post

THIS Christmas, Santa's switched things up and given Australia Post a special mission - he's asked for help in making Santa Mail even more magical! Instead of relying on the usual mailbox magic, Santa wants kids to deliver their letters in person to their local Post Office. It's a whole new way to send Christmas wishes straight to the North Pole, and Santa can't wait! Starting 15 November, it's time for little ones to hand-deliver their letters to the Post Office and receive a special response straight from the North Pole. Each child who brings in their letter will leave with a reply straight from Santa, along with a special Christmas Pip the Koala ornament — a perfect keepsake to hang on the tree!

To ensure kids receive their magical reply before Santa and his elves load up the sleigh for Christmas Eve, here's how the festive fun works:

- Write a letter: Kids are encouraged to write a letter to Santa, sharing their Christmas wishes and maybe a few good deeds they've accomplished this year. Pop the letter in a sealed envelope, no need for a postage stamp or return address. Santa has enough on his sleigh!
- Visit the Post Office: Starting Friday, 15 November, head to your local Post Office and drop off your letter. Get ready for some Christmas magic!
- Receive a special reply: As soon as they hand in their letter each child will receive a special reply from Santa, along with a lovely Christmas Pip the Koala ornament to hang on the tree.



Sent your letter already? No problem! If your child has already mailed their letter, they can still come into the Post Office to collect their special gift and letter from Santa. After all, Santa wants to make sure everyone feels the joy of the season.

For more information about the Australia Post Santa Mail program and updates, visit auspost.com.au/about-us/supporting-communities/literacy-education/santa-mail



Eastsider News is the trading name for Independent Community News Group Incorporated. The primary contact point for ICNG and Eastsider News is eastsidernews1@gmail.com

The current *Eastsider News* management team comprises Anne Young, Mike Daly, Sal Dugan, Glenys Grant, Chris Gray, Leigh Naunton, David Strang, Caroline Leslie and Joy Mettam, all volunteers. Someone who has also contributed much to ensure our continuity is Chris Young. Thank you to Chris Gray who puts much effort into the layout of the newspaper.

Disclaimers

Eastsider News is a means by which people in Whitehorse, Boroondara and adjacent areas including Manningham and Monash can share information, opinions and experiences. A spread of interests and views that reflects the diversity of people in the area is encouraged, but views expressed in *Eastsider News* by individual writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors, Independent Community News Group Incorporated, or any other organisation.

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