

Our college's houses are named after prominent members from Victoria and our Melton community. Each is significant with regards to these important individuals' commitment to demonstrating our college values – Respect, Achievement, and Responsibility.

Barak House

Barak House is named after Aboriginal spokesperson, and the last chief of the Yarra Yarra tribe, William Barak.

William Barak was born in 1824. As a young boy, William Barak lived during the 1835 European colonisation of the Kulin nations, which included interactions with John Batman. Due to tribal dislocation resulting from European colonisation, William was not properly initiated into his tribe. He was initiated by family members by receiving a possum shawl, necklet, waist string and nose peg. Barak had to learn traditions and tribe lore informally¹. He received an informal, colonial education at Reverend G. Langhorne's mission school during 1837 – 1839².



Image: William Barak, 1895.
Source: State Library of Victoria – William Barak.

As an adult, William Barak became an artist, activist, and educator³. He was a cross-cultural pioneer and one of the earliest Indigenous Australians to advocate for Aboriginal rights, giving agency to their circumstances resulting from colonisation. Barak was also instrumental in establishing the farming community at Coranderrk, and "... contact with such people as Graham Berry, Alfred Howitt, ... and Alfred Deakin, [and] his petitions and public appearances were important spurs to action"⁴.

William Barak died on 15 August 1903.

Lang House

Lang House is named after the Lang family. Thomas Lang was the Head Teacher at Melton State School. His sons, Horace and Thomas John, both served during the Great War (1914-1918).

Horace Lang enlisted into the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) on 23 March 1915, serving with the 24th Infantry Battalion. Horace saw action both at Gallipoli, and then, along the Western Front (France) including – Bapaume, Bullecourt, and Pozieres⁵. Horace was promoted to the rank of Lance Corporal

¹ Patricia Macard, 'Barak, William (1824-1903)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barak-william-2930/text4239>, published first in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 11 December 2019.

² Ibid.

³ University of Melbourne, 'William Barak', <https://murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au/engage/william-barak>, accessed online 11 December 2019.

⁴ Macard, *Barak, William (1824-1903)*.

⁵ Australian War Memorial, '24th Australian Infantry Battalion', <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U51464>, accessed online 11 December 2019.



Image: Horace Lang
Source: National Archives Australia, Discovering Anzacs – Horace Lang.

on 12 March 1917⁶. He received the Military Medal for “bravery in the Field”⁷, where he demonstrated “... conspicuous gallantry in constructing and holding an advanced bombing post near FLERS on 18/19 November within close range of the enemy ... Corpl. Lang refused to be relieved until his Company left the trenches, setting a most encouraging example of endurance”⁸. Horace was reported wounded and ‘Missing in Action’ (MIA), and later reported as ‘Killed in Action’ (KIA), for his action at Bullecourt on 3 May 1917⁹. Horace’s body has never been located and is commemorated on the Villers-Bretonneux Memorial¹⁰ in Somme, France. He is also commemorated on the Melton Cenotaph, Melton State School Honour Board, and Moonee Ponds Methodist Church Honour Board¹¹.

Thomas John Lang enlisted into the New Zealand Expeditionary Forces on 25 October 1914 and was a Pay Clerk. He was posted to Cairo, Egypt and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant on 25 April 1917¹². Thomas John contracted pneumonia and malignant malaria. He died in Cairo on 18 August 1918¹³ and is buried in the Cairo War Memorial Cemetery¹⁴. Thomas John is also commemorated on the Melton Cenotaph and the Melton State School Honour Board.

Pyke House

Pyke House is named after the Pyke family; one of Melton’s first settler families. Brothers Thomas, Robert, William, George, and Oliver arrived in Victoria from 1839, and onwards, from England.

The Pyke family’s property boundaries, known as a ‘run’, extended from modern-day Melton, and stretched as far as Ballan. Much of the Pyke’s family original land is now covered by Pyke’s Creek Reservoir.

⁶ Melton Family History Group, ‘Just Another Pair of Socks – Horace Lang’, <http://meltondistrictanzacs.org.au/people/72.html>, accessed online 11 December 2019.

⁷ National Archives Australia: Australian Imperial Force, Base Records Office, B2455, First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914-1920; items NAA: B2455, LANG HORACE.

⁸ Melton Family History Group, *Just Another Pair – Horace Lang*.

⁹ Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘Corporal Horace Lang’, <https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/1455551/lang,-horace/>, accessed online 11 December 2019.

¹⁰ Commonwealth War Graves Commission, *Corporal Horace Lang*.

¹¹ Virtual War Memorial Australia, ‘Lang, Horace’, <https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/241035>, accessed online 16 December 2019.

¹² Archives New Zealand: Agency Code AABK, Series Number 18805, Accession WW541, Record Number 0066152, Item ‘Lang, Thomas John’, Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘Lieutenant Thomas John Lang’, <https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/113023/lang,-thomas-john/>, accessed online 11 December 2019.

The Pykes were well known for establishing the hunting club in Ballan. They introduced a local hunt, originally pursuing kangaroos and dingoes¹⁵, however by 1845 “... Thomas Henry (“Gentleman”) Pyke imported some foxes”¹⁶. The fox hunt, known as ‘Pyke’s Hunt’ became “... one of the highlights of the Victorian social calendar. It brought something of the life in “the Old Country” to the new land”¹⁷.

Pyke’s Hunt became synonymous with the naming of the township of Melton. During the Hunt one year, it was suggested, and accepted, a new name for the township. The township was to be named after the “... famous hunting ground Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire”¹⁸.

Watts House

Watts House is named after Hannah Jane (Grannie) Watts, a midwife, matron of the hospital, and a Melton pioneer.

Born in Ireland during 1831, Hannah, and her husband George Byrns, immigrated to Australia in 1851. They moved to Melton, establishing a home before George was killed in 1860¹⁹. After George’s death, and unusually for woman of her time, Hannah purchased land in her own name in 1863.

Further in 1863, Hannah married William Watts, where they established a family home in Toolern Vale, and raised six children²⁰.

Hannah Watts became known within the Melton district for her aptitude and ability in assisting local women with the delivery of their children. Watts built Lynch Cottage, on the corner of Yuille and Sherwin Streets²¹, which later became Melton’s first hospital as during this time, doctors travelled from Bacchus Marsh to attend to Melton residents²². Hannah was a constant for medical assistance within the Melton community. By 1887, Hannah’s reputation had grown to the extent where she established her own midwifery practice²³.

Between 1886 and 1921, Hannah Watts recorded a total of 442 births within the Melton district. In addition to recording births, Hannah recorded surgical operations and, also, deaths where she had assisted doctors. She assisted with the delivery of Thomas Watts Minns, her final baby, shortly before her death at the age of 90.



Image: Hannah Watts, Jack Burns and Lena Burns.
Source: Joan Starr, *Melton. Plains of Promise*, p. 89.

¹⁵ Lucy Bracey, Fiona Poulton, and Ellen Spalding. 2018. ‘Growth, Progress and Community Spirit. A History of the Melton District’, Melton City Council, Melton, p.67.

¹⁶ Joan Starr. 1985. ‘Melton. Plains of Promise’, Melton Shire Council, Melton, p. 33.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 33.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

¹⁹ Bracey, *Growth, Progress and Community Spirit*, p. 52.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 52.

²¹ Ibid, p. 52.

²² Starr, *Melton. Plains of Promise*, p. 98.

²³ Bracey, *Growth, Progress and Community Spirit*, p. 52.

Hannah Watts died on 21 October 1921. She is buried in the Melton Cemetery. Her obituary stated “... residents looked to Grannie as their doctor, philosopher and friend. Hundreds, ... thousands of people held the deceased in veneration ... A woman of great energy and determination combined with superior intelligence, Grannie conquered difficulties that would have made many falter”²⁴.

To honour her work and contribution to the Melton community, ‘Hannah Watts Park’ was established by Melton Council in 1985.

REFERENCES:

Books

1. Bracey, L., Poulton, F., and Spalding, E. 2018. ‘Growth, Progress and Community Spirit. A History of the Melton District’, Melton City Council, Melton.
2. Starr, J. 1985. ‘Melton. Plains of Promise’, Melton Shire Council, Melton.

Online

3. Australian War Memorial, ‘24th Australian Infantry Battalion’, <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/U51464>, accessed online 11 December 2019.
4. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘Corporal Horace Lang’, <https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/1455551/lang,-horace/>, accessed online 11 December 2019.
5. Commonwealth War Graves Commission, ‘Lieutenant Thomas John Lang’, <https://www.cwgc.org/find-war-dead/casualty/113023/lang,-thomas-john/>, accessed online 11 December 2019.
6. Macard, P. ‘Barak, William (1824-1903)’, Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barak-william-2930/text4239>, published first in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 11 December 2019.
7. Melton Family History Group, ‘Just Another Pair of Socks – Horace Lang’, <http://meltondistrictanzacs.org.au/people/72.html>, accessed online 11 December 2019.
8. Virtual War Memorial Australia, ‘Lang, Horace’, <https://vwma.org.au/explore/people/241035>, accessed online 16 December 2019.
9. University of Melbourne, ‘William Barak’, <https://murrupbarak.unimelb.edu.au/engage/william-barak>, accessed online 11 December 2019.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 53.

Archival Material

10. Archives New Zealand: Agency Code AABK, Series Number 18805, Accession WW541, Record Number 0066152, Item 'Lang, Thomas John', Archives New Zealand, National Office, Wellington.
11. National Archives Australia: Australian Imperial Force, Base Records Office, B2455, First Australian Imperial Force Personnel Dossiers, 1914-1920; items NAA: B2455, LANG HORACE.

Images

12. National Archives Australia, 'Discovering Anzacs – Horace Lang', <https://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au/browse/person/237682>, accessed online 16 December 2019.
13. State Library of Victoria, 'Artist: William Barak', <http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/william-barak>, accessed online 16 December 2019.
14. Starr, J. 1985. 'Melton. Plains of Promise', Melton Shire Council, Melton.