



Balwyn Historical Society Newsletter

June 2016

Meetings

Thursday 9 June - 8.00 pm

Speaker: Judith Scurfield

Topic: Historic Maps of Boroondara

Judith Scurfield is the former curator of the State Library of Victoria's map collection.

Thursday 14 July – 8.00 pm

Speaker: Ian Hundley

Topic: North Balwyn Post WW2

Ian Hundley will speak about changes in the built and natural environment of North Balwyn post WW2

Thursday 11 August – 8.00 pm

Speaker: Robin Grow

Topic: Murder of a Messenger: Melbourne's Violent 1930s.

Robin Grow is president of the Art Deco and Moderne Society

**All meetings are held at the Balwyn Evergreen Centre
45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn**

Email: balwynhistory@gmail.com website: www.vicnet.net.au/~balwynhs

Recent Speaker-Peter Barrett

Peter Barrett's started his very interesting talk about several unusually named Melbourne buildings with a discussion of Finks, a building named after Benjamin Fink a prominent figure during the land boom and bust era. Only the façade could be salvaged when the building unfortunately caught on fire in 1897.

The Carry On building on the corner of King Street and Flinders Lane is still in existence. Built with a lower level of bluestone for a grain merchant it was later the headquarters of the Carry On Society which raised funds for WW1 servicemen and dependents.

The Kalizoic building in Elizabeth was the first Melbourne store with a business devoted to home furnishings and was known as a family store.

The Leviathan store, named after a large sea monster, was the first American style department store in Melbourne and had the misfortune to be one of the first stores to be looted during the the1933 Police Strike.

Zerchos in Collins Street was widely known as a secretarial College while the T&G building with its wedding cake tower was in fact built in 3 stages between the 1880s an the 1960.

Peter also explained how the invention of lifts together with the development of steel frames made possible the construction of buildings higher than 5 or 6 storeys. Victorian "sky scrapers" subsequently allowed the spires of commerce to compete with the spires of religion.

BHS Membership 2015-2016

Membership fees are due on July 1. The fee will remain the same for the 2016-2017 financial year.

\$25 - single membership

\$35 - joint membership i.e. 2 adults at the same address.

A renewal form accompanies this newsletter.

You may renew your membership at the next meeting. Payment may be made by cash or cheque (payable to *Balwyn Historical Society*). It would be helpful if you could place your payment in an envelope marked with your name(s). Otherwise please send the completed renewal form together with a cheque to **The BHS Treasurer, Balwyn Evergreen Centre, 45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn 3103.**

For membership enquires contact Barbara Russell – 9857-6416

Balwyn Historical Society - Contact details

President	Bill Pritchard	9857 8001
Vice President	Marilyn Poole	
Secretary	Pat O'Dwyer	9836-3652
Treasurer/	Barbara Russell	
Membership	Judith Cleary	
Speakers/	Robin Kelly	9836 6589
Publicity		

**Balwyn Historical Society is a program of the
Balwyn Evergreen Centre. Phone –
9836 9681**

Archivist	Pam Herrington
Newsletter	Pat O'Dwyer 9836-3652

Non-Committee Assistants
Resources Heather Alford
Newsletter mailout Lynette Woolley,
Deidre Woolley

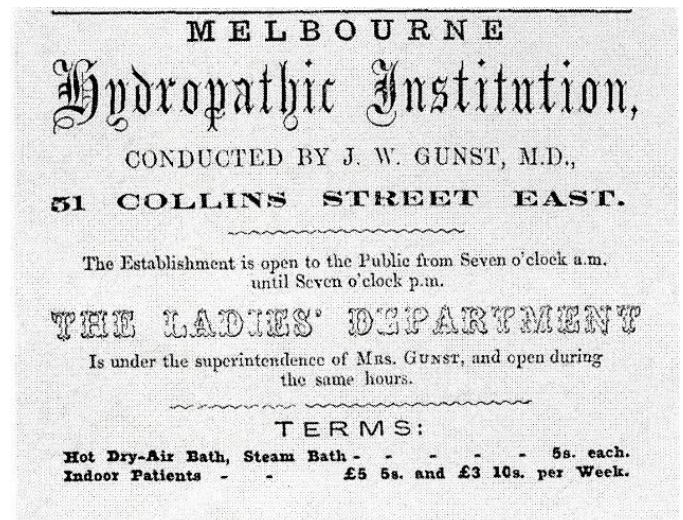
The Remarkable Dr J W Günt

Part 2. Johannes Werner Günt: medical pioneer, founding member of the Melbourne Homeopathic Hospital, Balwyn landowner, resident of Boroondara, entrepreneur.

One of the problems in writing biography is that while dates, places and events are interesting they, in themselves, do not necessarily tell us a great deal about the spirit of a person. In the first article on Günt which appeared last month, I tried to convey that he was adventurous, probably something of a risk-taker, well educated and scientifically curious. In this, the second article, other qualities will emerge.

Günt arrived in Melbourne from London in August 1865, his wife Jane arriving somewhat later in January 1866 (Armstrong). Following his arrival he established consulting rooms in Collins St. East and in April and May of 1866 advertised that he would also be available to see patients on alternate Sundays in Castlemaine and Bendigo (Ibid). By September 1866 he had established the Melbourne Hydropathic Institute which provided both in-patient accommodation and out patient facilities (Ibid).

An advertisement in *The Argus* (Monday 14 January 1867 p. 8) states ‘the Ladies Department is under the superintendence of Mrs Günt’. The terms were ‘Hot, dry-air bath, steam baths 5s each’ with separate terms for in-patients. The Sands and McDougall Directory indicates that between 1867 -1868 Günt was listed as a surgeon located at 149-153 Collins St, Melbourne. Socially it seemed that Günt was doing well, a report in *The Argus* (Wednesday 27 November 1867 p. 5) noted Günt among the many ‘colonial notabilities’ that attended a levée in the Exhibition Building in honour of the Duke of Edinburgh.



Courtesy Barbara Armstrong.

Homeopathy became very successful in Europe and America in the early 19th century and its efficacy was publicly debated in England from the 1840s onwards. This debate began in Melbourne in the 1850s with the arrival of John Hickson from England and Thienette Berigny from France both of whom advertised the benefits of homeopathy in local newspapers and established successful practices in Melbourne. (Australian Postal History and Philately). Berigny addressed a large public meeting in Melbourne in July 1855. (*The Age* Saturday 21 July 1855 p. 6) describing homeopathy as a “revolutionary scientific movement” and attacked allopathic practitioners. (Berigny 1855) The debate continued and ‘involved Australian practitioners and their opponents’ (Martyr p. 79). Any competitors to orthodox medicine (allopathy) were often viewed with hostility and labelled ‘quacks’. There were constant verbal attacks and ridicule of homeopathic practitioners. Günt joined this debate with passion defending homeopathic practice and attacking his critics.

On 30 October 1869 Günt, together with two other homeopathic physicians Drs. Ray and Teague, a chemist, a group of business people and influential friends met in the rooms of the homeopathic pharmacy of Gould and Martin at 90 Collins St. to consider founding an institution that would service the needs of the sick poor using the principles of homeopathy. Having decided to continue

with this venture, the group moved quickly, and within a matter of weeks the Melbourne Homeopathic Dispensary rented premises at 153 Collins St. (Templeton 1969 p. 12) and opened on 22 November 1869 (at the location of the former Hydropathic Institute) offering medical services free of charge. The three doctors were appointed honorary medical officers. The first annual report of the Dispensary indicated that ‘741 persons had been attended to, of which 302 had been discharged cured, 217 then remaining under treatment and the balance, excepting 15, did not present themselves after treatment’ (‘Melbourne Homeopathic Hospital’ *The Argus* Friday 6 October 1876 p. 7).

The establishment of the Dispensary triggered some sarcastic comments from the Editor of the *Australian Medical Journal* (no. 107 15 March 1870 p. 96). ‘A number of amiable dreamers met on the 2nd instant to congratulate each on the success of what they are pleased to term a “Homeopathic Institute” at 153 Collins Street East.

Günst was clearly incensed and his response in this war of words was forthright and bold. In the pamphlet *Allopathy versus Homeopathy* in ‘*The Australian Medical Journal* and ‘*Homeopathy versus Allopathy*’ (1870) he wrote:

As the Editor has purposely gone out of his way for the express purpose of venting his sarcasm, irony and spleen, on Homeop’athists and Homeop’athy, and has paraded my Name before his readers, I shall not be over-ceremonious in dealing with this Nameless censurer, whose impudence I am, in charity, disposed to pardon, in consideration of his ignorance (Günst 1870 p. 4).

Günst continued “A number of amiable dreamers? Could the Editor have been wide-awake when he penned this offensive expression?” (p. 5). He listed some of these so-called amiable dreamers who included influential people supporting the Melbourne Homeopathic Dispensary such as The Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Melbourne, the Very Reverend the Dean Macartney, the Chief Justice his Honour Sir W F Stawell Kt James Wilson, Esq. J.P and Robert Reid. He then proceeded to name the many and varied critiques of allopathy or what today we would call mainstream orthodox medicine.

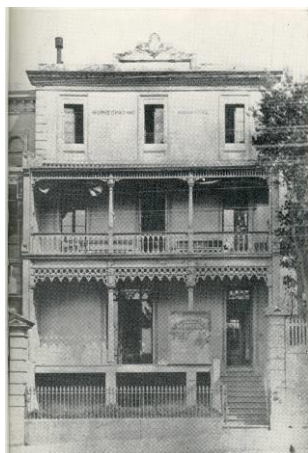


Johannes Werner Günst
Source: State Library of Victoria

In the meantime, Günt was expanding his professional services. An advertisement in *The Telegraph* (Saturday 24 July 1869 p. 10) informed readers that he had moved to 95 Collins St East for consultations with patients and also, under his direction, a hydropathic and homeopathic sanatorium in South Yarra had been established. '*The South Yarra establishment is at Blair Gowrie, Chapel-street bridge, on the summit of the hill, where the grounds are watered by the River Yarra, one of the healthiest situations, with commanding views of the suburbs of Melbourne*'.

The Dispensary continued until 1876, heavily dependent on charity and run by a committee elected annually (Templeton, 1969). Günt remained an active member of the Dispensary and continued as an honorary medical officer until 1873 when he resigned but remained on the Board of Management until 1893 (Ibid). The Dispensary had no provision for in-patients; it had no beds and no nurses. Although the founders may have wished to establish their own hospital, nevertheless their initial attempts focussed on making connections with already existing hospitals in Melbourne. However, they were unsuccessful – indeed *The Australian Medical Journal* seemed to regard the suggestion as 'highly comic' (Ibid p. 11).

In the mean time, a group of 15 influential ladies, not connected with the Dispensary, set about raising money and by 1874 had gathered a large fund for a hospital. The ladies' committee also persuaded the Government to grant land for a hospital. The Dispensary Committee finally agreed to amalgamate with the ladies Homeopathic Hospital Committee in 1874 (Ibid p.19). Temporary accommodation was sought and the Melbourne Homeopathic Hospital opened at 17 Spring St in 1876 in premises, which had formerly been the Hospital for Sick Children (Ibid p. 22). It had a provision for outpatients 'and 14 beds for in-patients, it was the first Homeopathic hospital in the southern hemisphere, and remained in Spring St until 1885' (Ibid p. 22).



Homeopathic Hospital c.1880
Spring St. (Source: Templeton)



Melbourne Homeopathic Hospital St Kilda Rd
c.1888
<http://localhistory.kingston.vic.gov.au/htm/article/295.htm>

The provision of hospital facilities as well as outpatient needs brought homeopathy into a major collision with orthodox medical circles (Ibid). Various sites for the hospital were considered, however most attracted so much criticism they were rejected. Finally, in 1879 the Government granted land for a site on St Kilda Rd and building began very quickly. The first stage of the new Melbourne Homeopathic Hospital was opened in 1885 and a south wing for surgical cases opened in 1890. The name of the hospital changed in 1934 to that of Prince Henry's Hospital.

From the 1870s onwards, Melbourne suffered from ‘epidemics of typhoid fever, measles, scarlet fever and diphtheria’, and mortality was high due to poor hygiene, inadequate water supply and sewerage and, for the poor, overcrowding in badly constructed dwellings. (Anderson 2006, p. 47). Melbourne suffered a diphtheria epidemic in 1870, and the mortality rate was such that the press called for a commission to inquire into the causes of the disease (*Empire* Thursday 26 May 1870 p 2). The premier of Victoria, Charles Gavan Duffy, facing political difficulties, announced a Royal Commission into diphtheria and by-passed both the Medical Board of Victoria and the Central Board of Health (Brown 1999 p. 146).

In 1870 Günt wrote a pamphlet called *Diphtheria and Its Simple Treatment* in which he detailed his treatment for diphtheria. (pp 4-6).

‘A teaspoonful of powdered sulphur in a wineglass of cold water applied as a gargle every ten minutes. The sulphur could also be blown down a quill into the patient’s throat. ‘In a few hours’ ‘the spots and yellowish exudation will have disappeared and the danger is over’. This was followed ‘with a prescription for a triple titration of arsenic in one grain doses as a ‘restorative’ (pp 4-6_ Brown p. 142)

In the same year, Günt published *Homeopathic Progress in Australia – A Monthly Journal of Record and Domestic Practice*, which appeared for one year. The journal dealt with things such as basic hygiene, basic anatomy and physiology and was aimed at the domestic market.

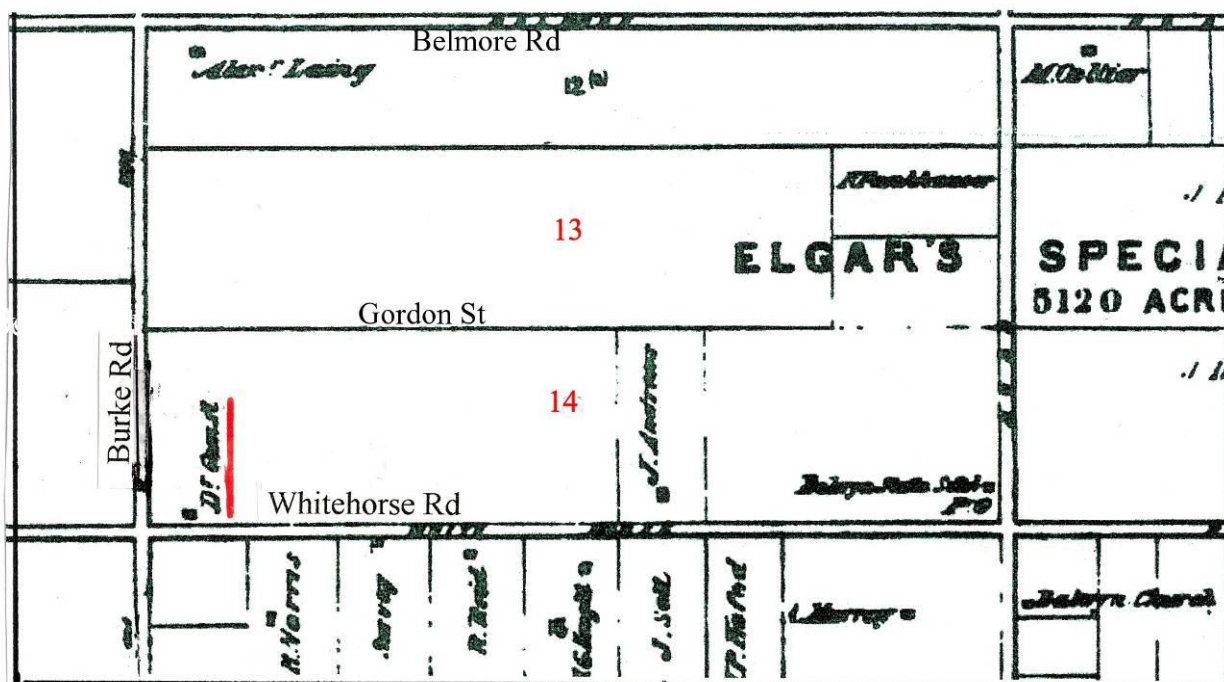
In 1872 Günt was appointed as a member of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Diphtheria (Victoria Government Gazette 1872). Hostilities with the medical establishment continued unabated. The *Australian Medical Journal* (January 1872 p. 26) commented ‘If even Dr Günt had been an illustrious homeopath, his inclusion in the Commission would have been an insult to all the others, but as his scientific claims, like his globules, are absolutely infinitesimal, his appointment is a sorry jest’.

The *British Medical Journal* reported on the situation in Australia as follows: ‘The Commission members named are Dr Günt (homeopathic), Dr Motherwell, Dr. M’Crea (Chief Medical Officer), Dr Reid and Mr. Thompson. The other members of the Commission have very properly refused to act with Dr Günt’. (1872 p 452)

Günt responded to the criticisms of his appointment to the Royal Commission in a letter to the Editor of *The Argus* (Wednesday 21 February 1872 p. 7) eloquently and at length. He commented wryly that so much trouble had been taken to tell him that his company was not wanted on the Royal Commission. ‘But I have not chosen to accept the hint and retire’. He pointed out that it was in the interests of the public for the Commission to gather as much information from as many sources as possible on diphtheria and that including a homeopathic practitioner is ‘not only logically defensible but publicly advantageous’. His letter of response was measured and dignified compared with the strident tones of his critics.

Despite his battles with the medical establishment, Günt turned his attention to the property market. The Shire of Boroondara Rate Books of 1873-4 show Günt owning land adjacent to Whitehorse Rd in Balwyn. He is listed again in 1874-5 and in more detail in 1875-6 as owning a house and land of 100 acres off Whitehorse Rd. By 1876-7 the Whitehorse Rd properties had changed somewhat, Günt’s name was erased and that of Thomas Trotter inserted with land of 26 acres. The next entry is that of Günt with property of 50 acres with the next entry again is that of Thomas Trotter, farmer as tenant and Günt the owner of house and land of 50 acres. The Sands & McDougall Directory lists Günt as a resident of Whitehorse Rd, Balwyn in the years 1875 and 1876. The Rate books continued to list Günt

as the owner of two adjacent properties off Whitehorse Rd, both of 50 acres. The Rate Books of 1878-9 indicate Günt as owner of one property with the tenant of the house and land being Joseph Aarons, gentleman. In 1880 Günt owned 2 houses and land on three adjacent lots adjoining Whitehorse Rd. and in 1881 the final entry was Günt as owner of house and land of 61 acres with a tenant John Hyde, farmer.



Section of map of early landowners not to scale – Günt owned land in portions 13 & 14

These were not Günt's only ventures into the property market. When Sorrento began to be developed as a holiday resort and land became available for selection, a number of Crown allotments were taken up by prominent Melbourne citizens. (Richie) In the Blairgowrie district allotment 50B was selected by G B Kerferd, Attorney General and later a Supreme Court Judge, allotment 50A was for Dr J W Günt homeopathic doctor of Melbourne his other neighbours being a barrister and a judge. (Richie). Richie suggests that Günt owned the land as early as 1870 and that he built a house there by 1875. This house now called Longford Cottage is located in Brooke Crescent (<http://www.realestate.com.au/property-house-vic-blairgowrie-121594358>).

In 1880 Günt was still a member of the committee of the Homeopathic Hospital and had pledged 50 pounds towards the building fund. He was a man of influence, and in 1880 was the attendant physician to Sir Redmond Barry at his final illness and death. (*The Argus* 24 November 1880, pp. 5-6). Although he no longer owned property in Balwyn after 1881, he continued to live in the surrounding areas. One of his residences was a substantial eight-room brick villa, with bathroom and stables, in Burwood Rd, Hawthorn (close to the Tower Hotel) auctioned in 1887 (*The Argus* 10 November 1887 p2). The Sands & McDougall Directory indicates him residing at Normanby Rd. Kew in 1887 and 1888. *The Australasian Medical Directories* for 1883, 1886 and 1892 list him as having a practice at 185 Flinders St. and in 1885 his son (Charles Werner Günt), now a physician, was also at 185 Flinders St.

By the late 1880s Günt was involved in business and property ventures. This was the period of the property boom in Victoria. In 1886, he, together with a number of other doctors, was involved in a short-lived project to establish a European-style spa at Drysdale-on-the-bay, Port Phillip (*The Argus* Saturday 21 August 1886 p. 11). A prospectus for the proposed company Clifton Spa Mineral Springs Ltd was published in *The Argus* (15 February 1887 p

7) with Günt listed as one of the provisional directors. The project was withdrawn a few days later (*The Age* Tuesday February 22, 1887 p.3). Today, the site is of archaeological significance in terms of 19th century health tourism when ‘water cures’ and ‘taking the waters’ were so popular.

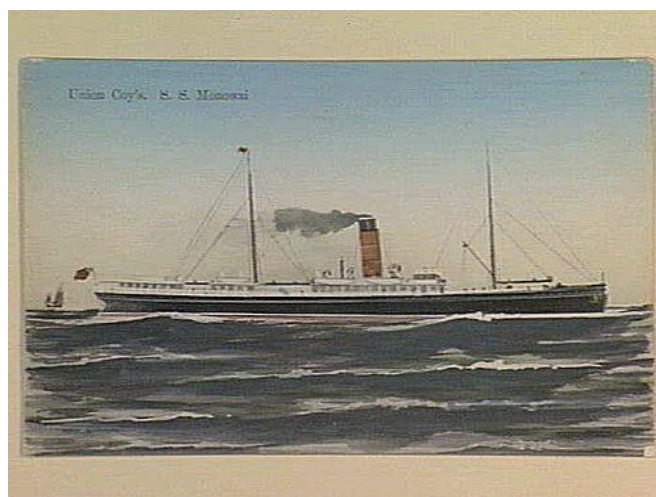
In 1889 Günt announced his retirement and that he was moving to Geelong where he would continue in private practice (*The Geelong Advertiser*, Wednesday 7 August 1889 p.2). Among his extensive property purchases in the Geelong area was Barwon Grange (now Heritage listed and operated by the National Trust (<https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/places/barwon-grange/>) where he lived for a short time.

However, his sojourn in Geelong was brief. One can only presume that he was caught up in the economic downturn of the 1890s with its property busts and bank failures. By 1891 a Mr. H F Richardson advertised for sale by auction in the Exhibition Hall at 2 pm:

‘Dr Günt’s numerous properties in Chilwell, including the two valuable family residences known as ‘The Grange’ and ‘Roslyn’, 21 allotments of land in the Barwon-crescent and Fairymead estates etc the whole being for positive unreserved sale, as Dr Günt has left the colony and decided to realize the whole of his Geelong properties (The Geelong Advertiser ‘Town Talk’ (Wednesday 28 January 1891 p.2)’.

By April 1891 there was a notice in the *Geelong Advertiser* (Monday 27 April 1891 p. 4) that there had been a most satisfactory sale of household furniture and effects. buggies, horses etc for Dr Günt at Barwon Grange, on Tuesday and Wednesday last, everything selling at most satisfactory prices’. In 1892 *Geelong Advertiser* ‘Town Talk’ (Tuesday 12 July 1892 p.2) noted the auction sale of properties in Woodstock and Fernleigh streets, Chilwell belonging to Günt.

Günt’s life became somewhat difficult to follow in the 1890s. Whether this was due to personal or financial difficulties is hard to ascertain. Having disposed of goods and properties in Geelong, he travelled back and forth to Honolulu and perhaps San Francisco. According to Armstrong, Günt moved to San Francisco on 5 May 1891 and registered there as a homeopathic physician (Armstrong). He returned to Sydney on the ‘Alameda’ on 25 May 1892. (<http://marinersandships.com.au/1892/05/097ala.htm>). Shortly afterwards, he departed from Sydney for Honolulu with his son as saloon passengers and an unnamed person in steerage on 9 August 1892 on the ‘Monowai’. While in Honolulu, Günt practised in a Dr Gilbert Foote’s consulting rooms. Many advertisements announcing this appeared in local papers in September and October 1892 such as those in *The Daily Bulletin* ‘J W Gunst MD has removed to Dr. Foote’s premises and office, corner of Punchbowl and Beretania streets, during his absence’ (Thursday October 27 1892 p 2 and Wednesday October 12, 1892 p. 3) or *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser* “A card Dr J Werner Günt from Melbourne Australia, can be consulted at Dr. Foote’s premises and office from 9 to 12 a.m. and from 2 to 5 p.m.’ (Tuesday October 11, 1892 p. 1). Günt returned alone to Sydney on the ‘Monowai’ on 27 March 1893. His son returned from San Francisco on the ‘Mariposa’ in May 1893. (<http://marinersandships.com.au/1893/03/117mon.htm>)



SS Monowai c.1890

Source: <http://www.clydesite.co.uk/>

Günst was still involved in life in Melbourne despite his travels. He continued to be a member of the Board of Management of the Homeopathic Hospital. (*The Argus* Saturday 19 July 1890 p. 12) and was welcomed back to the Board of Management after an extended leave of absence on 19 April 1893 (*The Age* Saturday 22 April 1893 p. 14). A notice in *The Age* (Saturday 26 August 1893 p. 8) indicated that Günst had moved to 68 Collins St near the Melbourne Club.

Günst died at his residence in Collins St on 19 April 1894. His adventurous career was at an end. Obituary notices announcing his death appeared in newspapers Australia wide.

The third and final article in this series will explore some of the issues that have arisen concerning Günst's personal life and his family while doing this research.

Acknowledgments

My thanks to Lucille Andel, to Barbara Armstrong for permission to use photos from the website www.historyofhomeopathy.com.au and to Pat O'Dwyer for her research and for initiating this project.

Sources

- Anderson, W. 2006 *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* Duke University Press, Durham, N.C.
- Armstrong, B. *History of Homeopathy in Australia* www.historyofhomeopathy.com.au
- Australian Medical Journal* 1870 no. 107 15 March p. 96; 1872 January p. 26
- Australian Postal History and Philately, 'The Homeopathic Hospital Melbourne, An Early History' <http://www.auspostalhistory.com/articles/633.php>
- Smith, F. B. 1999 Comprehending Diphtheria' *Health and History* Vol 1, No 2/3 (1999) pp 139-161
- Berigny, Th. 1855 *Medical Philosophy: An Appeal to the People of Australia for the Candid Investigation of Practical Medicine* Slater, Williams & Hodgson, Melbourne
- British Medical Journal* April 27 1872 p. 452
- Empire* 1870 26 May 1870 p 2
- Günst, J.W. MD 1870 *Allopathy versus Homeopathy* in 'The Australian Medical Journal and 'Homeopathy versus Allopathy, Melbourne, Evans Bros.
- Günst, Dr 'Günst and the Diphtheria Commission Letter to the Editor of *The Argus*'. *The Argus* (Wednesday 21 February 1872 p 7
- Günst, J.W. 1870 *Diphtheria and its simple treatment* Clarkson, Massina & Co, 1870 pp 6-9 Melbourne National Library
- 'Health and Medicine in the 19th century' Victoria and Albert Museum <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/h/health-and-medicine-in-the-19th-century/>
- Loudon, I 2006 'A brief History of Homeopathy' *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* Dec (99) 12 607-10
- Mariners and Ships (<http://marinersandships.com.au/1892/05/097ala.htm>;
<http://marinersandships.com.au/1893/03/117mon.htm>

Martin and Pleasance 'History' <http://www.martinandpleasance.com/about-us/history/>

Martyr, P. 2002 *Paradise of Quacks: an Alternative History of Medicine in Australia* Macleay Press, Sydney

Richie, J. 'Blairgowrie: Some Blairgowrie History' <http://rosevilleblairgowrie.blogspot.com.au/2012/05/blairgowrie-jack-ritchie-1970.html>

Richie, J *Blairgowrie Some Blairgowrie History Back Beach (Koonya to the Divide) -1966'*
<http://rosevilleblairgowrie.blogspot.com.au>

Shire of Boroondara Rate Books 1873-1882

Templeton, J. 1969 *Prince Henry's: the evolution of a Melbourne hospital 1869-1969* Robertson & Mullins, Melbourne

Templeton, J 'Prince Henry's Hospital' *eMelbourne The city past and present*
<http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM01188b.htm>

The Age Melbourne 21 July 1855 p. 6; February 22, 1887 p.3; 22 April 1893 p. 14; 26 August 1893 p. 8

The Argus 14 January 1867 p. 8; 27 November 1867 p. 5; 'Melbourne Homeopathic Hospital' Friday 6 October 1876 p. 7; 21 February 1872 p. 7; 24 November 1880, pp 5-6; 10 November 1887 p2; 15 February 1887 p 7; 21 August 1886 p. 11; 19 July 1890 p. 12

The Daily Bulletin Honolulu H.I. Thursday October 27 1892 p.2

The Geelong Advertiser, 7 August 1889 p.2; Town Talk' 28 January 1891 p.2; 27 April 1891 p. 4; 'Town Talk' 12 July 1892 p.2;

The Pacific Commercial Advertiser Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands vol XVI, no 3198 Tuesday October 11, 1892 p. 1

The Telegraph 24 July 1869 p. 10

Victoria Government Gazette 1872 *Diphtheria Report of the Royal Commission Appointed by His Excellency the Governor to Enquire into the Origin of the Disease known as Diphtheria, the best mode of Treatment thereof, etc.; 1872*