

August
2008

NEWSLETTER

The next meeting of the City of Moorabbin Historical Society will be held on
SUNDAY 31st 2008 at 1pm. MAU 00808

OUR INTERESTING GUEST SPEAKER ON SUNDAY, 31ST AUGUST 2008 IS
Ms DOROTHY BOOTH.

The topic is: 'THE HISTORICAL MENTONE RAILWAY GARDENS'
Due to a prior commitment **please note** that Dorothy's talk will commence at 2.30pm

This months interesting anecdote was written for the City of
Moorabbin Historical Society's Newsletter of *March/April 1965*.

Author: Nance Blackman
"Three Pieces of Paper"

Nance was an industrious, and long-standing past member of the MHS

"Have you a taste for history? Snippets from these three pieces of paper will interest you. They were once white, but now are brown, heavily nibbled at the edges, with a hole here and there. They are one and a half issues of the "Moorabbin News" of 1907, dated October 19th and November 16th. Here if you look carefully you may "catch time by the tail", and see what he has been up to these last sixty years.

The first thing you notice about the news, and advertisements, is an omission. All the information is concerned with Moorabbin, Cheltenham, Mordialloc and Mentone, (the two latter were then part of the shire). Bentleigh and Highett, infants then, long since grown up, were too small to be mentioned.

You are interested in finding out how the people of 1907 lived. Several references to the Cheltenham Butter Factory in Centre Dandenong Road, make it clear that some were dairy farmers, often called, like their counterparts in

England, "dairymen". Many were market gardeners; the large advertisements for ploughs, fertilizers, spray mixtures, and manures were for them. Others were poultry farmers, blacksmiths, carpenters and labourers. In the townships there were storekeepers, butchers, bakers, a bootmaker and repairer, saddlers, tailors, hairdressers, a watchmaker and jeweller, auctioneers, chemist, (who sold animal as well as human medicine), and hotel and café proprietors. Several advertisers say they will call for, as well as deliver, orders. It is interesting to note that the "confectioner", (vanished word), sold fruit and vegetables as well as sweets, drinks and ice-cream.

Three businesses were run by women, (perhaps they were a hint of the future). Hannah Beazley was a "family butcher",

Mrs Redston "begs to inform the citizens of Moorabbin that she has started a milk round and is prepared to deliver milk twice daily" - (pasteurization was hardly dreamt of).

CITY OF MOORABBIN
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mrs Bickerton was in charge of the "Cheltenham Dairy and Produce and Cooked Meat Store" - we had not yet stumbled on the richly-suggestive "delicatessen". There was also in Cheltenham an "Oriental Laundry"; possibly "Oriental" was used instead of "Chinese", because of the prejudice at that time against "the sons of heaven"

Nearly everyone worked much longer hours than they do today. For all those on the land it was daylight to dark: the townspeople were not much better off. One news item is revealing—"Messrs. Biehl and Matthews have decided to close their establishments, (shops), at 8pm. They hoped "that the half and half arrangements, now in vogue, would soon give way to this early (!), closing; they could then spend a quiet evening at home or attend meetings instead of burning gas and waiting for customers".

They burnt gas, because electricity had not yet reached Moorabbin - it was only a town luxury. But, out in the kitchens and sitting-rooms of the farmers' and gardeners' houses, lamps and candles provided the lighting. This often caused fires, so many in fact, that several Fire Brigades had been formed in the shire.

(Interesting Note: Electricity only finally arrived in Bentleigh in 1916)



Circa 1930: Installing a new power pole, to upgrade the electricity in Bentleigh. Site is the corner of Centre and Jasper Roads. J L Smith's garage in the background. (Safeway's today)

And the wages in 1907? Here are two clues. Grommann's Hotel, Mordialloc, wanted a "useful man" who could milk and "understand (?) poultry". His reward was to be 12/- a week. At the local court George King, a former employee of the Cheltenham Butter Factory, sued James Journeaux for four weeks wages—5 Pounds. Even allowing for the difference in money value we seem a little better off today!

The people of 1907 were not much addicted to that modern tyrant, the telephone. Only two of twenty-one business advertisements mention a phone number. It was, perhaps, still something of a curiosity. "

Volunteer Help Needed

Firstly - HELP !!! There are still a few 'Box Cottage' Open Days without a volunteer for visitors. Please assist if you can.

Secondly - In July we started undertaking an Inventory of "Box Cottage" contents. This slow, and painstaking task, hasn't been done since about 1988, and is long overdue. Unfortunately, previous records seem difficult to follow.

The task is best achieved by volunteers working in pairs. Apart from the company, this helps speed the process. One person records the items, whilst the other handles, describes, and numbers, the item.

This is such a large task, that no end date can be given, rather it will depend on the time volunteers can give. Currently we have started work on the clothing in the cottage.

Assistance is very welcome.