

NUNAWADING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Nunawading Historical Society

X-N 42

OCTOBER 1969

Price 5 cents

Number 26

Registered at the General Post Office, Melbourne, for transmission by post as a periodical

Page 1

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 8th October, 1969, in the Coffee Room, Civic Centre, Whitehorse Road, Nunawading. 8 p.m. sharp.

FOURTH ANNUAL MEETING

AGENDA

Confirmation of Minutes of Third Annual Meeting.
Presentation of Annual Report and Financial Report.
Election of Office-bearers and Committee Members.

To be followed by a *FAMILY NIGHT*. Each member is asked to bring along one or more treasures and to talk briefly of these, OR to relate a short historical anecdote, OR relate the origin of two street-names in the City of Nunawading.

NOTE: Each member to bring a plate of supper, please.

It is hoped to have a really large attendance for this important meeting, with all age groups of members' families. Business will be as brief as possible, with emphasis on the latter part of the program

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS will be due. It assists the Treasurer if these are paid promptly.

Has each member obtained one new member or a family membership?

SEPTEMBER MEETING: 'HISTORY OF THE ADULT DEAF SOCIETY IN VICTORIA'

Mr Parkinson unfortunately had a very small audience, but those present found much of interest in his address.

From 1860, help had been given to deaf children, but in 1883, a group of fourteen men began an organisation for adults. This prospered, and, after several moves, the society purchased 75 acres of land in Blackburn, near the lake, in 1909. The present building was erected, and on eight acres which had been cleared, the people grew bulbs, and the flowers were sold in Melbourne and Sydney markets. However, in 1920, after a legal dispute concerning payment of rates, flower-growing ceased.

The aged, infirm and dependent who are deaf and unable to communicate orally with others, and of whom some are blind and deformed, are cared for in the pleasant surroundings of the Home in Blackburn. Red Cross workers achieve a high standard with the hand-crafts they teach these people.

The Society still owns 33 acres, the remainder having been sold to Camberwell Grammar School and the M.M.B.W., from whom the N.C.C. has acquired a large area to preserve as open space.

The Jolimont Square, East Melbourne property was purchased by the Society in 1923. Here clubhouse, chapel, social club, hostel and interpreting service are provided for many people.

COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE. Our Society welcomes Cr G. R. Oakley as its recently-appointed representative of Nunawading City Council

BLACKBURN OPEN-AIR SCHOOL

Many local residents are unaware that Blackburn was the site of an interesting educational experiment, beginning more than fifty years ago, and continuing until recent times.

In 1912, a committee headed by Mr W. S. Keast, M.L.A. for Dandenong, began to raise money to build an 'Open-Air School'. Mr Burke, a member of the committee, and Mr K. Hart, the Secretary, had seen similar schools in England and U.S.A. and believed that great benefits could be derived from this type of school. Mrs Keast, as Treasurer, wrote about 700 letters asking for donations, and more than £300 was received.

Mr Keast then led a deputation to Sir Alexander Peacock, Minister for Education, in January, 1913, asking the Department to accept the money and run such a school. Sir Alexander pointed out that the Department was already experimenting with a similar type of school at Sandringham. Mr Frank Tait said that the children there were in normal health and that the Committee's proposal was that the new school should be for sickly children.

The Department agreed to go ahead, accepted £ 312/16/9 and began plans for this special school which would be attended by children selected by medical officers as markedly inferior in nutrition and general health, until they regained normal health. It was planned that these pupils would be given milk or soup and biscuit at 11 a.m., with a lunch of soup, stew, bread and butter and milk, or stew and pudding alternatively, at 12.30 p.m., and milk and biscuit at 4 p.m. It would be a 'country-type' school with 20-25 children to each teacher, in an open-sided pavilion.

The Department then searched for a healthy district and a site close to a railway station, as the railway authorities were willing to allow concession fares for pupils. The blocks 17, 18, 19, 36, 37 and 38 of Blackburn Township Estate were purchased for £120; this was the southern part of Gardenia Street, running through to Main Street, approximately one acre in size. On 1st June, 1915, State School No. 3850, Blackburn Open-Air School, was opened, with accommodation for 30.

On 5/8/1921, the western portion of the site fronting Main Street was exchanged for land fronting Gardenia Street — lots 17, 18 and 19, plus £50 were exchanged for lots 33, 34, and 35 which adjoins the northern boundary of lot 36 in the original purchase.

Apparently there was interest in the experiment overseas, as Spain enquired about it in 1919.

The greatest changes occurred in the twenty years after the Second World War. The building was improved with such additions as a glassed-in area and an extra rest-room with rubber mattresses, and playground equipment was supplied. Improved and nutritious meals were served, after a period of experimentation with various diets, including the Oslo Diet. Travel by rail was superseded by free travel in a special bus through Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond, to and from Blackburn. Various women's groups in Nunawading visited the school and assisted with amenities, and the City Council gave aid.

There was an enrolment of 24, and pupils usually made a stay of one year. The normal syllabus for Grades 3 and 4 was followed, with emphasis on personal hygiene, remedial physical exercises under the direction of the School Medical Service and trained

Physical Education Staff, and constant medical supervision. Encouragement was given in Nature Study, with bird-observing, walks in Furness Park, and bird-tables for food; grass was not cut until the Spring wild-flowers had finished blooming, and many additional native shrubs were planted.

In 1964, in view of the increasing number of social welfare agencies and groups, and the various Council services being developed, the Education Department decided to close this project. The building is now in use as a Psychology and Guidance Centre, whose officers visit schools and interview hundreds of pupils each year.

Future plans include provision of a specially designed building to house Psychology and Guidance and the Speech Therapy Centres for this area.

K. Patterson
Miss A. Baird

READING – NOW AND THEN

'Nunawading Gazette', August – September 1969

"Blackburn Branch Library lends 340,000 books each year.

32,000 borrowers. Planned Central Library with 86,000 books . . . and Reference Section with seating for 100."

'Ringwood Borough News 14/8/1931

A TRAVELLING LIBRARY

A novel venture has been undertaken by Mrs Vernon Williams, widow of the Australian author, who has commenced a travelling library in the Croydon district, using as its nucleus the splendid collection of books owned by her late husband. This will be kept up-to-date by continuously adding the latest works of fiction, etc. to the library, which contains many rare works difficult to obtain outside private collections.

Mrs Williams has commenced delivering to her subscribers on horseback, but later it is her intention to purchase a horse and jinker and go further afield. The novelty and convenience of having books delivered to the door have appealed to residents and good business has resulted.

More extracts from the 'Ringwood Borough News'

BLACKBURN & MITCHAM SHIRE COUNCIL 30/1/1931

Swimming Baths

The Engineer presented his report of preparation for a swimming basin, on the site of the old Shire Hall.

The cost of the work was estimated to be £ 2,500; this included construction of the basin, wire fencing, dressing sheds and conveniences, caretaker's office, laying on of water and provision of drainage easement and paving of same for a short distance from the baths. This did not include filtration or treatment of water by mechanical process or tiling of interior basin. >

After discussion, one councillor moved that the Government be approached for a grant, and the seconding councillor stated there was no doubt that baths were wanted in the municipality, and the work would relieve the unemployed to a certain extent.

Another councillor predicted that baths would be a 'white elephant' in the district. Finally the motion was lost on the count.

More extracts from the 'Ringwood Borough News' (contd)

Note: The Council of the newly formed Shire of Blackburn and Mitcham (1925) purchased a dwelling for Municipal Offices in Whitehorse Road, slightly west of the present offices. This building was burnt down in 1927.

As no reference exists of any other Shire Hall, it is presumed that this was the suggested site.

BLACKBURN 6/3/1931

Melba's Funeral

The residents of Blackburn assembled en masse to pay their last respects to Dame Nellie Melba, the world-famous singer, on Thursday last, when the funeral passed on its way along the Whitehorse Road to Lilydale Cemetery. The children of the Blackburn School were gathered along the roadside, and as the cortege approached, the fife and drum band played 'Onward, Christian Soldiers'. Diminutive Gwen Saynor and Kathleen Gedye, kindergarten scholars, proffered a beautiful wreath, consisting of white dahlias, mauve asters and asparagus fern. A halt was made while it was accepted and placed in one of the many cars heavily laden with floral tributes.

MITCHAM 17/4/1931

Old Landmark Passes

An old building, in the shape of the old blacksmithy, opposite the Walker Park Reserve in Whitehorse Road, has been demolished. This building was one of the oldest in Mitcham, being standing upwards of 45 years. Old residents will remember Mr Ethridge, who conducted the forge some 30 years ago, followed by Messrs Thompson and Tarrant, from whom the business passed into the hands of Mr H. C. Walker, a most highly respected resident, who retired from active business some years ago. The building was in constant use until some months back, when Mr J. Vanner moved to more modern premises nearer the centre of the town.

BLACKBURN 12/6/1931

Cross Country Running

Blackburn is becoming increasingly popular with amateur athletic and harrier clubs during the winter months for cross country running. Undoubtedly the country in this locality is of a most desirable type for this sport . . . Next year one of the local associations such as the Progress Association, should endeavour to get the Victorian Amateur Athletic Association to hold some of their bigger races at Blackburn. A number of clubs that have been out here have all expressed themselves as highly delighted with the facilities for cross-country running.

D. Mattingley
(Editor)

Telephone 878 4586