

NUNAWADING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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NEXT MEETING Wednesday August 9th, in the Coffee Room, Civic Centre, Whitehorse Road, Nunawading at 8 p.m.

PROGRAM: WORK NIGHT - We hope as many members as possible will attend as there is so much to do in the way of filing, compiling, and preserving our collection of newspapers, documents, photos, etc. For historians a work night is very interesting and rewarding, so please come along to assist those who are always there.

SEPTEMBER MEETING September 13th. Guest Speaker: Mrs Sharpe. "Woods Point." Mrs Sharpe is one of our own members who has researched her subject for many years in preparation for a book she aims to publish one day. We can look forward to a very enjoyable and enlightening talk on this gold mining town.

ANNUAL MEETING This is an advance notice that our annual meeting takes place on Oct. 11th, 1972. All offices become vacant as per the constitution, at this meeting and nominations are required for the following positions: President, Vice-Pres., Secretary, Ass. Sec., Treasurer and four committee members. It is hoped that some of our present office bearers will re-nominate but at this stage we do know we need to replace: Ass-Secretary ... already served 3 year term, maximum as set down in constitution. Secretary ... Not available for third term owing to pressure of business. All members of the Society are urged to give their support by canvassing amongst their fellow members for office-bearers, completing the form enclosed, and returning it to the secretary at the September meeting. The success of our Society is due to the contribution each member makes. We are about to complete another historic year, and yet, with each succeeding year, further research should improve our knowledge of the early days and life of Nunawading. This is your opportunity to be active by nominating yourself or another member for one of the for-going positions.

M. Chatwin President

CHURCHES OF NUNAWADING (PAST AND PRESENT) Series 8

The Catholics. The Parish of St Thomas the Apostle, BLACKBURN.

It would seem there could not be a better time than right now to research the history of this parish, for as recent as Sunday, July 16th 1972, parishioners their friends, and invited guests, including the Mayor and Mayoress of Nunawading, councillors and Mrs Goble MLA witnessed the opening and blessing of the new church, St Thomas the Apostle. Set in 4 acres surrounding the parish school and hall, which has been the place of worship for many years, this well designed, completely modern church represents 18 years of combined effort from the parishioners and their parish priest, Father Ryan. For many the story began long before 1954, in fact, it was in 1939, when Father Gleeson, the newly appointed parish priest of Box Hill, arranged the Morton Park Hall as a venue for Mass for the Catholic Community of Blackburn, that the seeds of a new parish were sown. Prior to this, until the mid 1930's, Blackburn was part of the Ringwood parish. Morton Park Hall was the local picture theatre on Saturday nights, so on Sunday morning there was an all out effort to turn the stage into an altar and where necessary, camouflage the gay posters advertising next week's show. From this point onwards a small but willing band of workers did all in their power to raise funds for the day they would need a more lasting arrangement. An advisory committee was established in 1949 in view to raising funds for a church building - where or when was not known at this stage. By May 1951 an architect had drawn up plans for a school - church on the selected site at the corner of White horse Rd. and Maple St. How different this story would have read had things proceeded to plan. However this was not to be. When the builder was almost ready to start, at the point of getting materials delivered to the site, a very unusual situation came about. It came to the notice of Father Casey, who was administering the parish of Box Hill in the absence of Father Gleeson, that a magnificent site of 4 acres of land with a large brick house, tennis court and beautifully laid out gardens was for sale. The wheels moved very quickly, and very quietly, and within a week, 57 Central Rd. became the new site for the school - church of the Catholic Community of Blackburn. So great were the advantages of this change of site that, even the fact that a greater amount of money was necessary to commence the new project, did not daunt the enthusiastic parishioners. New plans were drawn up by the same architect and the same builder was chosen. On Nov. 15th, 1953, the Archbishop of Melbourne Most Reverend Dr Mannix blessed and opened the new school building which was to be a church on Sundays. In January 1954, Blackburn became the parish of St Thomas the Apostle, so called by Father Gleeson in honour of St Thomas the Patron Saint of India.

Then came the appointment of Father Paul Ryan, the first parish priest and his first appointment. On Feb. 4th 1954 the school opened under the guidance of the Nuns from Our Lady of Sion Convent, Box Hill, with Sister Frances Tereasa in charge. Classes were Preps, Grades 1 & 2, 50 pupils altogether.

From here the parish of St Thomas went on from one success to another owing to the generosity and enthusiasm of the parishioners and the foresight of Father Ryan P. P. More classrooms were added, and a hall to obviate the necessity of constantly moving desks for mass. By 1956 a house was bought for a convent and the Loreto Sisters took over the teaching duties. In 1958 the Christian Brothers began teaching in the boy's school, whilst at the same time moves were made to establish a school at East Doncaster. This became the parish of St Peter and Paul in 1960 and so becomes part of the history of Doncaster & Templestowe. A church - school building was opened in Orchard Gve, Sth. Blackburn, in 1962 and subsequently became the parish of St Luke's in 1963. North Blackburn also had their school by 1965 and by 1966 was a separate parish called St. Philip's. Histories of St Luke's and St Philip's will be recorded in their own right.

St Thomas' parishioners and Father Ryan continuing their good work, had set up three new parishes, added to school buildings, and assisted in the commencement of More College for Boys in Springvale Rd, still with their own church in view. At the opening of More College in 1968, the boys school was transferred there, leaving Blackburn Parish School with classes of boys and girls to grade 6, and girls to form 4. At last it seemed as if some action could commence to get a new church for St Thomas the Apostle. As the result of a Church Feasibility Study in December 1969, we now see at 57 Central Rd. Blackburn, a church building, nestling amongst the pines, wattles, and gums of the heavily wooded site, up to the minute in design with carpeted floor and heating, and most important of all, the result of 18 years endeavour of the parishioners and their parish priest. To these people it may seem the end to their dream, but to new and future parishioners of Blackburn, it will probably seem like the beginning because, in the hard cold words of the parish accountant, it will cost \$100,000.

(Researched and compiled by A. H. Poussard.)

Anis Poussard (Editor) 89 3383

CENTENARY BALL The Council have arranged a "Wild Colonial Ball" to be held in the new library on Sat. August 19th 1972. Tickets are \$14 a double, including a 3 course meal and drinks, and bookings can be made with Mrs. McCarthy at the Municipal Offices or with your Secretary.

CENTENARY RESEARCH PROGRAM As a result of the work of the Research Committee we now record:

Our longest residing citizen - Mrs Lousia Smith, Rooks Rd, Nunawading 93 years old.

Our oldest house still occupied - 113 Springvale Rd, Nunawading believed to be 95 years old. owned and occupied by Mr & Mrs Florio and schoolboy son.

Our oldest business still operating - Vitclay Pipes Pty. Ltd. Established 1873. (formerly Commonwealth Potteries) Springfield Rd, Nth. Blackburn.

We all appreciate the work of this committee and extend to Mrs Leach and the other members our sincere thanks. Whilst we know the research will continue till every important aspect of Nunawading is recorded, it is gratifying indeed, to have achieved the goal we set out for in 1972. You will recall Mrs Smith was honored on Centenary Day, and now the Council have expressed their intention to make a presentation to the others concerned at the Centenary Ball on 19 August 1972.

EXHIBITION OF SOCIETIES POSSESSIONS: This will be part of the annual meeting program so, members who are holding Society material in their own homes for safe-keeping, are asked to display it at this meeting, and to give a list of items held, to the Secretary for the records. Other attractions on the agenda for the annual meeting are still being finalised.

PUBLICATIONS For those who have seen and admired the photographic cover of a locally distributed directory, whose publishers "overlooked" their verbal agreement to include acknowledgement of the source from whence these photos came, we can tell you they are the photos given to the Society recently, by Mrs A.A. Hooke and provided by us for this attractive cover scene.

"HISTORY OF NUNAWADING" If you have not yet purchased a copy of Niall Brennan's book we recommend you do so. It is a must for all who want to know more of the past years in Nunawading. It can be purchased at Blackburn Newsagency, South Pde. where much of our material has been on display, and all other newsagents in the Municipality.

PROFESSOR BLAINNEY'S LECTURE Wesley Hall was filled to capacity by Higher Certificate students and other interested persons last week, to hear a very lighthearted and informative address on "Australia's Mining Rushes." All were impressed by the friendly manner in which the speaker conveyed his message and his desire to answer questions on this and other history subjects. After moving a vote of thanks to Professor Blainey, the president, Mr Chatwin presented him with an autographed copy of Niall Brennan's book, "History of Nunawading", just released.