

NUNAWADING  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



NEWSLETTER MAY - JUNE 1983  
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Dear Members,

Our third meeting of 1983 but our first for the year at the Civic Centre & a return after several years to the cosy atmosphere of the Coffee Shop was well attended.

Our speaker Mr. Jack McLean gave a great talk on the history of the Melb.-Hawthorn-Box Hill-Ringwood & beyond railway. Jack's knowledge of the signal track systems of railways gave us an insight into the development of the eastern railway from a single line with almost no safety devices to the 3 track automatic signal line of the present day. The increase in traffic on the line over the past 100 years from a few trains per day to the busy commuter service, the needs of the goods traffic & the building & re-building of stations, sidings & crossings were well illustrated by Jack's collection of time-tables, plans & photographs.

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Mr. Keith Rooney, a new N.H.S. member is researching the history of Blackburn North with the intention of eventual publication & has collected considerable material already, which he has loaned to the Society for the perusal of our archivist Keith Patterson. Mr Rooney would be interested to hear from anyone who has photographs or other material, either family or business on the Blackburn Nth. area, he can be contacted at his home 18 Sussex St. Blackburn Nth. ph.8782774 .

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The Nunawading Council has set up several plaques at Schwerkolt Cottage, one giving the history of the Cottage & area, the other to honour Mrs Jean Field & the late Mrs Pat Faggetter for their untiring efforts & dedication regarding the restoration & maintenance of the Cottage & gardens. The Cottage Committee of Management has been asked by the Council to take part in the organization of the Dedication on SUN. 15th May & to arrange a guest list & afternoon tea for the invited guests. The Nunawading Historical Society has been invited as a group to attend & also to provide some of the food for afternoon tea. Could all members intending to come along please bring a plate. A Girl Guide group will prepare & serve the teas.

As part of the Dedication the Council's 'Free Entertainment in the Parks' programme will present a small Musical Recital at the completion of the unveiling. Unveiling Ceremony begins at 1.30pm, the Music Recital at 2pm. Afternoon tea will be served immediately after the unveiling.

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DATES TO REMEMBER

Wed. 11th May  
7.45pm.

Please write them into your diary now.  
Nunawading Hist. Scty. Meeting at the home of Miss Chris Otterbach 15 Heather Grv. Nunawading.

Sun. 15th May  
1.30pm.

Dedication of Plaque at Schwerkolt Cottage inc.  
F.E.I.P. Music Recital. Please bring a plate.

Wed. 8th. June  
7.45pm.

Nunawading Hist. Scty. Meeting at the Coffee Shop Civic Centre Nunawading. Speakers will be Mrs Wendy Harrison A painting trip to China, and Mrs Barbara Rogalski A painting trip to Burra S.A.

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HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF.

by Val Fitcher.

Recently I was going through some old momentos & came across the very last issue of the "Argus" newspaper (Sat.19th Jan. 1957); I was interested to see the way history has just repeated itself. There was a news item which read "Last night gangs of rural firefighters assisted by volunteers were still fighting a fire that had burned large patches of scrub & grazing land along the old Narrewarren & Beaconsfield Rds. for a distance of more than four miles. The women-folk of Emerald worked overtime preparing sandwiches & tea for the weary men. It was suspected that the fires had been deliberately lit."

A little bit of trivia from the same issue.....  
you could rent a 2 - 3 bedroom house in the eastern suburbs for between £11.0.0. & £12.12.0. per week. A senior male clerk's position was advertized at a salary of £20.0.0 per week; a clerk-typist £14.10.0.!

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TATTSLOTTO, BINGO etc. ARE NOTHING NEW!

by Jean Webster.

Jean came across this early reference to Lotter-ies whilst looking through old newspapers on a recent visit to England. "The Origin of Lotteries in England."

The first lottery we meet with was drawn AD 1569. It consisted of 40.000 lots of 10 shillings each lot, the prizes were plate, & the profits were to go to repairing the 'havens of the kingdom. It was drawn at the west door of St. Pauls' Cathedral. The drawing began on the 11th Jan 1569 & continued incessantly drawing day & night till 6th May following. There were then only 3 lottery offices in London."

Copied from : "English Courier" Friday 9th Jan. 1795.

(Imagine how I felt sitting in the library in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England & being able to handle papers even earlier than this.)

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MY SCHOOLDAYS

by Joan Raczniok.

Memories of my first school in Streatham (S.W. London) are few - I cannot recall learning anything there. As my mother had been a teacher. I suspect I learned to read "naturally" before I went to school. I cannot remember learning to write & I was drilled in spelling at intervals by my father with such efforts of dictation as:"It is difficult to witness the unparalleled embarrassment of a harassed pedlar gauging the symmetry of a peeled pear". It was fun to surprise him by getting them right!

The local council school was large, black & forbidding - 55 years later it had not changed! The middle of the second floor was an assembly hall, presided over by the headmistress whose huge desk was on a dais on the window side. Pupils summoned to her presence had to cross what seemed like a football field to front up to "Madam". (I heard later that she insisted on this title because, poor lady, her husband's name was "Silley"). We sat in double desks with the usual sunken ink wells, but my pet hate was having to draw on greyish paper with black charcoal. Presumably I did not like getting my hands grubby - I was also a target for some of the tougher boys of the area because they could smell my scented soap!

When I was 8 or 9 my father lost his job (a telegram came while we were on holiday) & after 6 months we moved to Rugby, where he was to manage a printing works. It was several weeks before my mother found a school which she (and I) liked. In the meantime, she drilled me in arithmetic, geography & Palgrave's Golden Treasure. ("I come from haunts of coot & hern"- Tennyson - rubbed off). My next school was the junior section of, I believe, a C.of E. school. It was in a big, old house, surrounded by trees, shrubs & flower beds; there was a huge lawn on which we once presented an enactment of "The King's Breakfast" ("I do like a little bit of butter on my bread").

The senior section of the school was in a tall house nearby, but

"STRATHDON"

by Marjory Matheson Miller.

(Since the article by Flora Forbes on the founding of Strathdon Community Hostel & Unit Accommodation & Nursing Home appeared in the N.H.S. Aug.-Sept. '82 Newsletter several people asked for more information on Captain Matheson & the "Strathdon". His daughter Marjory Matheson Miller has written this account which will be of interest to N.H.S. members & will also add to the historical archives of Nunawading; thank you to Mrs Marjory Matheson Miller.)

Captain Charles Matheson, an Englishman with a Scottish name. chose an Australian bride, left the sea, and, in 1914, settled on an orchard in Tunstall, now known as Nunawading. His great love of the ship in which he served his apprenticeship reflects itself in the name "Strathdon" he chose for his property.

The "Strathdon", when launched in Sept. 1885, then called "Queen's Island", was the largest three masted barque in the world. Her builders, Messrs. Harland & Wolff of Belfast, experimented with a new rig. Vessels are known by their rig. Technically a ship is a vessel with three masts all supporting square rigged sails. A three mast barque carried square sails on the fore & main masts, & fore & aft sails, like a yacht, on the mizen mast. Surprisingly, this move to reduce canvas & save manpower often worked quite well. The vessel became easier to handle.

"Strathdon" registered 2038 net tons, measured 282 feet 8 ins. in length, 40 feet 6 ins. in breadth, with a depth of 23 feet 6 ins. Overall her carrying capacity equalled 3250 tons. Aft, her 58 feet long poop raised above the main deck housed the officers & served as the ship's nerve centre. Forward, a top gallant fo'c'sle of 32 feet gave the crew ample room to operate & store the anchor, & work the ship. A contemporary writer called her a "very handsome vessel". Steel built & truly "ship shape", every detail displayed beautiful finish. Her great length meant a noticeable drift between her masts when viewed broadside. With less canvas than some of her contemporaries, speed was not her greatest attribute, but she boasted other qualities.

In 1890, after 5 years afloat, Messrs. George Thompson & Co. (the famous Aberdeen White Star Line), owners of the renowned clipper "Thermopylae", bought the barque, renamed her "Strathdon", & put her into the Sydney trade. Sydney-siders admired her majestic bearing & good looks. She served Australia regularly with much needed general cargoes on the outward passage & returned with wool to England, a cargo which was stowed incredibly tightly in her capacious hold loaded through hatches.

One claim to fame is her encounter, after rounding the Horn, with a tremendous ice field drifting in the Southern Atlantic Ocean in May 1892. The tip of the ice reached 1000 feet, & the frail barque dodged icebergs for three days. This experience, so much dreaded by all seafarers who approached Cape "Stiff", gives "Strathdon" a place in nautical history.

The young Matheson, son & namesake of Captain Charles of the record breaking "Thermopylae", joined "Strathdon" as an apprentice in Sept. 1896, the year of her first visit to Melbourne. She then sailed to Newcastle to load wool & complete her voyage, and incidently give the young apprentice his baptism of Cape Horn breakers. Under her well respected Captain W. Phillip, Matheson was fortunate to receive training in navigation & community living, which made "Strathdon's" apprentices & crew privileged people in seafaring circles.

The year 1905 marked the sale of "Strathdon" to the French, who named her "Gers". She was recorded as one of a small band of sailing ships still afloat during the war. In Feb. 1924, her sale to Holland marked the end of a valiant career for herself & the men who sailed her.

The Community of "Strathdon", Forest Hill, named in her honour, carries on the traditions she stood for which so impressed a sailor lad of 14½ years. The Uniting Church has chosen to include a ship in its badge to stress its ongoing mission into the future. A beautiful barque gives its benediction.

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before I "went up" a new school was being built, with 2 quadrangles & an assembly hall/gymnasium in between. It was the Arnold High School for Girls (remember - this was Rugby). I regretted that when it was later taken over by the Local Education Authority it became the "Rugby High School". Open air corridors were an innovation on the upper floor. They were shielded by tarpaulins in wet, windy weather.

I was quickly introduced to French & Latin, to continue for 6 years, with an experimental class in German in Form V1. A highlight was an annual visit of a French lady who told us fairy stories in French with the aid of slides! The problems of Mathematics & Science were only partially unravelled for me, but the wonders of languages, history & English literature were given a basis for lifelong enjoyment.

Both academic & sporting prowess were recognised in the rivalry between the 4 school houses - Atholl, Nightingale, Bronte & Cavell. The 4 noticeboards, flanked by the coveted cups & shields, were on the walls of the assembly hall. Each Monday, the headmistress read a list of merits & demerits scored by houses for good or bad marks awarded to pupils, to our honour or shame! Doubtless the trauma of shame would be frowned upon today, but acknowledgement of success in study as well as in sport still seems to me to be reasonable.

On Speech Days we all wore white dresses & gloves; we were suitably impressed by the array of governors on the platform. We noticed that when starting to read her report was the only time the headmistress ever seemed a little nervous. A great event was when a founder governor, the Dutchess of Atholl, came to open the new school officially.

The headmistress, Miss Glenday, was a clergyman's daughter; she conducted daily morning prayers & has always been my ideal of dignity & quiet voiced authority. She left us to go to Clifton High School, Bristol & was a President of the Association of Headmistresses. I recently found in Nunawading library a book about the history of this association; it was called "Reluctant Revolutionaries" & Miss Glenday was joint author of this story of their fight for a good general education for girls. I now suspect that I was one of the more fortunate girls receiving secondary education in the late 1920's & early 1930's.

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TELLING OUR STORY

Joan Racznik's account of her school days is most interesting especially in view of the current course being conducted at the Avenue Neighborhood House corner Blackburn Rd. & The Avenue, Blackburn every Tuesday between 1pm & 3pm. Called "Telling Our Story" this open ended course of oral history is being conducted by historian Majorie Theobald who invites anyone interested in recounting & talking about their school days to come along. Contact 878 8056 for details.

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