

## NUNAWADING HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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### AUGUST MEETING

Dr. Ian Turner, of Monash University, will speak on "World War 1" at the Higher Certificate students' night at Wesley Hall, Blackburn on Wednesday August 8th. (Please note the date. It was in error in the last Newsletter).

### SEPTEMBER MEETING

Colonel G. Palmer, of the Salvation Army, will be the guest speaker on September 12th. His subject will be "The Salvation Army's Inala Village". The village, built as an old peoples' home, is in the grounds of what was for many years, an old men's home, and has a very high reputation, with a correspondingly long waiting list of people who wish to live there. It is a quiet but vital piece of work which has been going on for many years, and will probably continue for very many more.

### PARLIAMENT HOUSE

Mrs. Goble, M.L.A., showed many illustrations of different stages in the building of Parliament House when she spoke at the June meeting. A great deal of her information was prepared by the Parliamentary librarian from records held at Parliament House which increased the interest of her talk.

### HISTORICAL SCENES ABROAD

Mrs. Field's talk on Historical Interests from Abroad at the July meeting was well illustrated with pictures taken on her tour of Europe, ranging from old English Manor Houses to Greek temples. It was a wide-ranging, very diversified review of Europe.

### OPENING OF WINE CELLAR

The re-constructed wine cellar at Schwerkolt Cottage was opened by the Mayor (Cr. Frank Taylor) on Sunday 22nd. July. Members of the Society visited the newly-discovered cellar on an excursion of Nunawading last year. It had been discovered when men working on unemployed relief began clearing away fallen earth from a small hollow which had been described as the site of a wine cellar, and which the Committee of Management wished to restore. Instead of a small dug-out, which they had expected, it was found that a tunnel six or seven feet wide led about 50 feet into the hillside. Several tools, and a huge padlock

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which was apparently used to secure the door were also found. Since then the Council with assistance from Wynns Pty. Ltd., have cleared away debris and re-roofed the cellar. Stone walls on either side were still in good condition, so that it was easy to determine the size and construction of the cellar. It is now completely re-stored, with gravel floor, new roof logs, and stocked with a grape basket, cart, barrels, demi-johns and other implements used in wine-making. The whole is lit by concealed lights, and it is open to the public whenever the cottage is open.

There was a large attendance at the formal opening, including a number of members of the Mornington Historical Society. Most were surprised at the size and sound construction of the cellar. After the opening there was a small wine-tasting, with wine supplied by Wynns. Mr. Grace, of Vermont Winery, also assisted to assure the authenticity of the re-construction.

A few bottles of wine, bearing a special "Schwerkolt Cottage" label have been put down in the cellar. They are not to be opened before 2000 A.D.

A pleasing feature of the opening was the amount of publicity given by newspapers, radio stations and the Forest Hill Shopping Centre, which will assist in making the Cottage known.

#### VISIT TO MORNINGTON PENINSULA

The Society's excursion to Sorrento and the Quarantine Station will be on Sunday, September 16th. The bus will leave the Civic Centre at 8.45 a.m. and is expected to arrive at the Collins Memorial, Sorrento at 11.00 a.m. We will then meet Mr. Ronaldson, President of the Mornington Historical Society, who will act as our guide. Permission has been obtained to visit the Quarantine Station, so we should see many places of interest. Miss M. McGaw, 51 McCulloch Street, Nunawading (phone 374-5966) is taking bookings and fares, which are \$2.50 a head.

#### C.B.A. BANKING CHAMBER

The National Trust has sent out a special Newsletter about attempts to preserve the banking chamber of the C.B.A., Collins Street, Melbourne. The chamber has been classified, but the building is to be demolished. The Trust hopes to save at least the chamber and have it incorporated in any new building.

#### LAND PRICES

Recently land in Terrara Road, Vermont was sold at auction, and building blocks brought \$14,000, \$15,000 and \$16,000. This is a great contrast to prices in the 1860's, when they were first bought from the Crown at £1 an acre, and even fifty years ago, when Mr. G. Morton valued land in that area, mostly under orchard, at £100 to £125 an acre.



T.R.B. MORTON OF BLACKBURN

Mrs. Wainwright, one of our members, is a grand-daughter of Thomas Richard Burrowes Morton, a leading personality in the Nunawading area for more than thirty years, whose house in Gordon Crescent, near Blackburn railway station, is one of the landmarks of the district. From the recollections and records of Mrs. Wainwright and her cousin Mrs. D. Bullen, supplemented with other documents, the following information about T.R.B. Morton has been obtained.

His father, George Pickering Morton, arrived on the "Earl of Charlemont" from Ireland in 1854. The ship was wrecked at Barwon Heads, without loss of life, on 18th. June 1853. He was appointed to the Victorian civil service in July 1853, and became Clerk of Petty Sessions at Anderson's Creek in January 1858, then Warden's Clerk in 1863. He apparently resigned in 1865.

His son Thomas was born in Collingwood on 12th. March 1854 and was educated at Wesley College, when his father was living in Windsor. He was late starting school, but matriculated in nine subjects, and was noted as being good at figures.

When he was 34 years of age he was secretary of the Freehold Investment and Banking Co., one of the most active land and finance companies of the time. This company bought up more than thirty small farms in the Nunawading area, and he came to live in Blackburn with his wife (nee Louisa Mary Esther Morgan) when there were only four houses in the town. This company is credited in obituaries of T.R.B. Morton with having made Blackburn Lake and built the old Morton Hall, which was on the site of the present Blackburn branch of Nunawading Library. His house, which he named "Clonmore", occupied a very pleasant position overlooking the station and was in a part which seemed naturally suitable for a superior residential area. He was selected to the Nunawading Shire Council in 1888, and his contacts with the financial world of Melbourne were of great value as the Shire negotiated its first loans for street construction. The Freehold Investment and Banking Co. was also active in street construction, because a letter received by the Local Government Department from Nunawading Shire Council gave a list of streets made by them, including part of Blackburn Road and Railway Road, in 1890.

The following year a new company, of which Morton was a director, Blackburn and Tunstall Property Co., took over the Nunawading lands of Freehold Investment and Banking Co. Some of the shareholders were connected with the earlier company, and one or two were Blackburn residents. The value of the lands was nearly £250,000, but the new company failed to raise enough money to pay for them, and as the Land Boom burst it was unable to sell land to meet its obligations. The land reverted to Freehold Investment and Banking Co., which was

placed in liquidation.

This was a crisis period in Morton's life, and he seems to have tried to sell his Blackburn house, but failed. In the course of liquidating the Freehold Investment and Banking Co., he established an estate agency, with headquarters in Queen's Walk, Melbourne, a building demolished to make the present City Square. For some time he was in partnership with George Coghill, with branch offices in Box Hill and Canterbury. For many years he was steadily selling off the assets of failed Land Boom companies, mostly residential land in the eastern suburbs and country land near Western Port. His son George joined him in the business and at one time they were conducting weekly sales in Box Hill, Lilydale, Healesville, Launching Place and Emerald, which were the regular market days for all the small farmers of the district.

He retired from the Council in 1897, but was re-elected two years later and remained a member until his death in 1923. He was president in 1891-2, 1900, 1909-10, 1918-9, and had to contest only one election in more than 30 years.

From the time he came to Blackburn he took a great interest in St. John's Church of England, and had been secretary of the Vestry from the opening of the church in 1890 until 1920. A memorial tablet was unveiled in 1925.

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K. A. Patterson - Editor.