

WUNAWADING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A.E. SLETTEN

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Pres - Mr. J. Shortland Sec - Mrs. Poole Treas - Mrs. S. Barker
96 Loughnan road 6 Lernes st. 14 Cortice Ave
Ringwood 3134 Forest Hill 3131 Sunawading 3131

Early Post Offices - Improvised post offices of the early days were described by Mr. J. Baker, the Australia Post historian, at our September meeting. Early settlers had to make their own arrangements. The only real exchange of letters was between Melbourne and Launceston and Batman was the first local post-master. When Lonsdale arrived he was instructed to appoint a post-master. The Customs officer, Mr. Webb, acted for five weeks until an Edward Foster, who had been sent as clerk of courts, had to organise an office at the corner of Collins and William streets. He resigned after five months and a Captain Baxter was appointed. His wife did the work in a house in Flinders street, where she made up bags to go overland to Sydney and direct to England. Stone Craig then acted for a time until David Welch was appointed in 1839. In 1841 a post office was built and he was given an assistant. Street letter boxes, which seem to have been the first in the world, were set up in 1844 and the first stamps were issued in 1850. At that time a half-ounce letter travelling less than 15 miles cost 4d (3 cents).

Pioneers in Sunawading were very isolated. A punt over the Yarra at Leideberg connected with Melbourne until a wooden bridge was built in 1852. The first post office was at Box Hill in 1861. The second, at Ballyshannessy (now Burwood) in 1863.

Other offices and post masters were:-

- Forest Hill - 1874 - Mr Peacock who had the mail contract for the whole district
- Blackburn Creek - 1876 - Mr. George King, who was also a hotel keeper. The name was changed to Blackburn in 1885.
- L L Vale - 1881 - Mr P. Bowen. This office became Vermont in 1885
- Kitcham - 1884 - At the railway station
- Tunstall - 1889 - At the railway station. Mr Travers. In 1890 Mr John Barnes was station and post master. In 1923 the office was transferred to a shop. Name changed to Sunawading 1945

Annual Meeting - Wednesday, 10 October, will be our annual meeting. Nominations are required for all office-bearers - President, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and committee. The more entertaining part of the meeting will be in the form of members showing and describing their treasures.

November Meeting - At our meeting on 8 November there will be a general discussion of our activities and how they can be improved.

Excursion to Narrington - We have arranged an excursion by bus to Narrington on Saturday, 20 May. The Narrington Historical Society has arranged an itinerary for us to see as much as possible of places of interest within the time and will provide morning and afternoon teas. We will have to take our own lunch and there will be admission charges to some places such as the George Monstead. The bus will leave the Civic Centre at 9 o'clock and return at 6 o'clock. Fares will be:- Adults £4.50 Children £2.50

Theatre Light - Tickets are now available for a Theatre Light on Friday 23 April. The programme will be a comedy "How's The World Treating You?" by Litcham Amenity Group. Tickets are £3 each. Ring Mrs Poole for bookings.

May Lecture - At our May meeting in the Coffee Shop Mr. J. Wilson will be showing a series of slides illustrating Australian beauty spots with a touch of history. We have very many memories of a similar talk by Mr. Wilson a few years ago, when he dealt in similar fashion with Victorian gold fields.

Port Brisbane Northbourne River - The Western Historical Societies Committee is organising a boat trip up the Northbourne River, which is an interesting but neglected part of Melbourne. It will be in the Spring and fares are expected to be £2. Further passengers will be needed to make it feasible.

Museums etc in Western Suburbs - The Western Historical Societies has issued a list of museums and places of interest in our area. Besides our own, there are museums at Doncaster, Lilydale, Fern Tree Gully and Yarr Junction. Other places have the remains of the Coranderruk Aboriginal Station, graves of notable people, buildings and sites of interest, both architecturally and historically.

On These Roads - Extract from a report of Unwadding Shire Council proceedings in 1903 -

Letter received from C. Miller, of Vermont, saying no attempt has been made to repair Canterbury road. The excuse is "No rates". Why not take care of the rates paid by those who use the road, namely, the wood carters of Box Hill and Ringwood-Blackburn. If the road was made properly instead of a man being sent every now and then to "out in a day" thus only wasting money, the for one would cease to be an "annual crumbler". In the report by Mr. Walker when she last wrote that she had nothing to complain of, she had come to the conclusion that his eyesight was very defective, for no-one with undimmed vision could truthfully make such a statement.

Letter received from A. J. Farnilo, Vermont, calling attention to the bad state of Canterbury and Benthordale roads, which were becoming quite unsafe. He invited councillors to take a trip down the roads after a heavy rain, to see if there was not justification for something being done before winter. - Decided that members for the riding and the engineer inspect and report to the next meeting.

• Australian Navy - At our March meeting Mr Ricketts, who served in the Australian Navy from 1913 until after 1945, with the exception of 18 years between wars, told us about his experiences and the various ships flying the Australian flag. There will be a fuller report in the next News Letter.

Theater Night - We are planning a theatre night on 28 April, when the Mitcham Repertory Society will be presenting a comedy, "How's The World Treating You?" Tickets are \$2 each

Excursion to Mornington - Arrangements are being made for an excursion to Mornington, with help from the local historical society, which will probably advise us what to see, where to go and provide guides.

Coffee Table - Mr Harold Bakes has given us a mahogany coffee table to be disposed of for the museum funds. Tickets are 20 cents each, or three for 50 cents. This will be drawn on May 10

Centenary of "Loch Ard" Wreck - On 1 June 1878 the "Loch Ard" was wrecked near Port Campbell. There were only two survivors. This was the most famous of more than thirty major wrecks in the Cape Otway area. A number of events will mark the centenary this year, including an oration by Professor J.J. Auchmuty, "Settlers Under Sail" in the Great Hall of the National Gallery on Wednesday, 15 March. We will be represented by six of our members

Exhibition of Photographs - As part of the Moomba celebrations the Royal Historical Society is presenting an exhibition of some of its oldest and most interesting photographs, contrasting with modern ones. The exhibition opened on Tuesday 7 March, and is on the 14th level, 495 Collins street. Times of opening are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily. This exhibition will be in conjunction with the publication of Mrs. Tipping's photographic history, "Melbourne on the Yarra."

William Witt, First Shire President - William Witt was born at Salisbury, England, in 1833. He studied chemistry and when he married in 1857 he came to Australia on the recommendation of his brother, who was at Beechworth. He opened a chemist's shop there and followed succeeding gold rushes through the north-east of Victoria and the Eastern Riverina, opening branches on every new field. This often involved travelling through roadless country and crossing unbridged rivers, sometimes in dangerous circumstances. He was soon involved in public life and became Mayor of Beechworth in 1867. He began an agitation for a railway line to Albury and when the government agreed to build it he was elected to Parliament for the Murray district. He held this seat for three Parliaments, but had to leave Beechworth because he could not attend to his Parliamentary duties without being in Melbourne. For a time he had also to give up his business. He bought a property at Burwood, and was immediately elected to the new Shire Council. He was President for some years. Later, on retiring from Parliament and the council he resumed business at Prahran, then in Flinders street, Melbourne, while living in South Melbourne. He died in 1910, at the age of 77 years.

News-Letter - We have arranged to publish our News-Letter monthly instead of two-monthly. This issue has been delayed owing to difficulties in arranging duplication. These are now apparently overcome and we expect that each issue will appear about a week before each monthly meeting.