

Nunawading and District Historical Society Inc. NEWSLETTER



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June 2002

All mail to be addressed to P.O. Box 272 Mitcham 3132 - Museum Telephone 9873 4946

From the President

Firstly I would like to thank all who made our Open Day such a great success. Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought cars would be banked up along Deep Creek Road to visit our Complex. People came from far and wide! Rotary ran out of sausages, but the Historical Society people kept the refreshments coming. In perfect weather the Mayor, Councilors and visitors participated in the many activities and demonstrations arranged for their enjoyment.

The meeting on Saturday, 13 April with Dorothy Meagher speaking on the history of Blackburn Lake was very interesting. Dorothy and her husband Ray, after years of being residents and contributors to the life of the City of Whitehorse are moving to the country. Dorothy was very pleased with the presentation of a Barbara Rogalski painting. A copy of the "Lake Park Chronicle" referred to by Dorothy is enclosed for those members who attended the meeting.

Now that VicRoads has opened the new bridge on Deep Creek Road, the City of Whitehorse is preparing plans to redevelop the entry into the Cottage. The existing Toilet Block will be removed and replaced with a "super loo" placed nearer the playground BBQ area. Part of the old Deep Creek Road will be used for a carpark. We have been having regular meetings with Council on this matter.

Please keep Saturday 31st August at 1.30pm free. The Nunawading Arts Council has kindly sponsored a special event - "Fashion Through the Ages". The venue has still to be confirmed. Watch out in the August Newsletter.

Many thanks to all who helped at the 11th May working bee. Much was achieved.

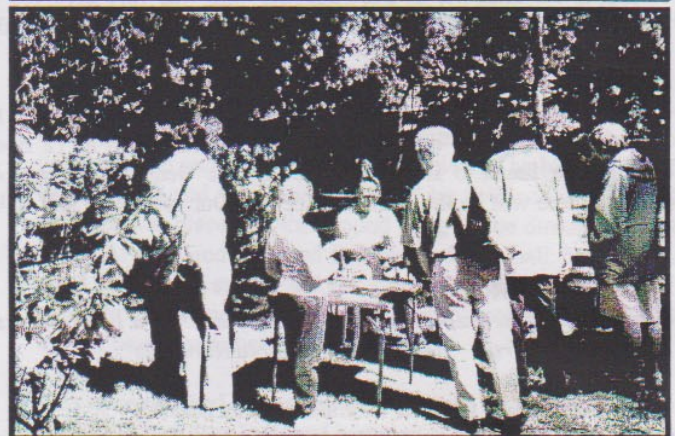
Congratulations to the Artifact Cataloguers. They have now catalogued 3000 items.

We welcome new members, Carol Dale of Burnley and George Cox of Blackburn. George was a member of the original Committee of Management for Schwerkolt Cottage and restored some of furniture we admire today.

Judith Fry



*Open Day April 2002.
Sheep Shearing with an interested audience.*



Open Day April 2002 - Come spinning with me!

JUNE GENERAL MEETING

PLEASE NOTE - Due to the long week-end this meeting has been brought forward to the Saturday 1st June. Our speaker will be Arthur Tonkin, and his subject will be "The Outer Circle Railway". Arthur is a member of the Surrey Hills Historical Society and he has spoken to us previously on "The Riverboats on the Murray" and "Growing up in Surrey Hills". These were enjoyed by all and his Outer Circle Railway talk should prove to be just as interesting.

MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Society is to foster historical interest and knowledge. To collect, document, research, preserve and exhibit items that show how people have lived and worked in the development of the Whitehorse area from human settlement to the present day.

From the Archives

A further excerpt from Denise Moorhouse draft on the history of the former City of Nunawading started in the April Newsletter. This story was written to illustrate how the first settlers established their home.

After a while, when he could take a rest from his urgent clearing of the forest, Patrick made plans to build a home. The canvas shelter and brush lean-to had been a matter of expediency, but the same instinct that had made him take up the selection drove him to want a home. Martha had her linen and crockery still in Melbourne, and there were a few pieces of cedar she had valued too much to sell. With a home, life would seem less raw.

There was no thought of a brick home - bricks were expensive to buy, but even more expensive to bring from Melbourne along the rough bullock tracks and time was money to Patrick. If he could not afford to pay for cartage and he took the time to go and get them himself it would mean up to three days for each load. Now there were tall straight trees and these he could use.

"We'll build on a hill" said Patrick, "a man likes to build on a hill. We can see more and there need be no fear of floods". "No", said Martha, "I want a sheltered position away from the wind that bothers those who live on the top of a hill".

So they built on the side of a hill. Close to a stream but high enough to avoid any risk of floods.

The home was to be simple, very simple, but even to build a humble house meant that Patrick was to embark on weeks of strenuous work, and needed strong muscles, great enthusiasm and confidence in his own ability. It would have to be a small home, but then, it did not need to be big. There were only the two of them and if they had a family he would build another room. His first task was to walk through the forest and mark the trees he would use. They needed to be tall and straight for at least twelve feet. Branches would mean knots and if there were knots, his job of splitting the logs would be hindered. The circumference of the trees did not matter because apart from the initial effort of felling the tree a thick tree split as easily as a smaller one. However he wanted a degree of uniformity and kept his eye peeled for the stringy bark of about two feet in diameter. The stringy bark was his first choice because the one action of cutting provided him with the split logs for this home and the bark for his roof. "I'll want a room about twenty feet by twelve" said Martha, "we could afford a stove couldn't we?", she said hopefully, "not that I'd throw away the camp oven. I've used it so often in the open fire I'm sure I couldn't cook a damper as well in a stove oven, but it would be marvelous for me to have a real stove. You could build it in at the side of the fireplace, couldn't you?" "I think we could afford it Martha. That would be something, wouldn't it, eh? A bride of two years and her own inside stove. But we'll get the room built before we think of luxuries".

He sat down with pencil and paper. Patrick was fortunate, he had had a basic education, an Aunt had taught him to read and write and calculate simple sums. Because he was able to put his thoughts on paper and because he was a methodical man he drew a plan of his room.

"I'll need four whole tree trunks for the corners, and two more whole trunks for the doorway. Then at approximately two feet diameter I'll need about ten for holding down the bark. Saplings about 15 feet for the rafters. How many? At four foot intervals, no better make it three foot intervals, that's ten". He sat a while. "Martha? How long do you think it will take me to cut down fifty two trees and ten saplings? The saplings will only take me a morning but I just have the feeling the trees will take a bit longer".

He made his plans in the heat of the summer and sat under the hot canvas thinking. There was other work to be done. He would not be able to neglect his plan of developing the land. therefore all work for the home must be fitted in without interfering with work on the land grant.

Before the sun had risen he walked into the forest with a well ground axe over his shoulder. The strokes were strong and deep, biting large chips from the wood. As the first tree fell he realised this was no sapling to carry home for a temporary fence. These trees would need a bullock to cart them back to his home site, he would roll them as close together as other trees would allow but the bullocks of his neighbour over in Mulgrave would have to be used. The trees would have to be felled and hauled within a week in order to remove the bark.

When all the trees were piled on the home site Patrick began, with wooden maul ring hammer he pounded the bark to separate it from the wood of the tree. This separation could not be seen from the outside, but Patrick knew that when he cut the bark with one clean, lengthwise slit right into where the bark had adhered to the wood he could lever it off.

The bark had to come off in one piece or it would be useless for roofing. Sometimes he needed to pound certain patches but with patience and skill the bark came clear. The bark came off in one piece and with "bush science" he flattened it. The bark cylinder was placed on the ground lying in the direction of the wind. At the windward end Patrick made a small fire and the wind carried the smoke and hot air through the tunnel of bark. expanding the smooth inner surface and automatically flattening the bark into a sheet.

This operation had to be done while the sap was still in the tree. When the bark was removed he set to splitting the logs in two, lengthwise. These, placed side by side (with a flat side inside) would form the walls. The room had a skillion roof and the logs were sunk into the ground to give stability. The corner posts were buried deeper than the walls and would stand for a hundred years.

He had flattened and levelled the ground before erecting the walls, and to do all possible to ensure a dry floor he had dug drains on the high side of the hill. The floor was to be an earthen one similar to their neighbours a mile away. It would not be possible to avoid all moisture in the winter months but the wallaby skins tanned in their own troughs from the bark of trees would do much to keep them comfortable.

There would be no window glass, Patrick would have liked to have delighted Martha with this extravagance but the price of glass, the risk of it not arriving intact and then its fragile nature once installed made it impracticable. Wooden shutters would keep out the winter winds.

THANKS

Barbara Rogalski thanks all who helped on Heritage Day. We made \$356.00 on the Plants Etc Stall, \$206.00 from donations for Afternoon Tea, Forest Hill Rotary donated \$100 from the proceeds of their Saugage Sizzle – a good effort by all.

Recently we had trouble with our amplifier. It was not economical to repair. Ken Barelli who has helped us before with a cassette recorder has generously donated a new amplifier.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Annual General Meeting, Saturday 10 August at 1.30 pm. Followed by a talk by Doug Livermore, a former orchardist in Morack Road, Vermont will speak on "Orcharding Today and Yesterday".

Working Bees for the rest of the year are 9.30 am to 12 noon on the following Saturdays – 14th September and 9th November.

Workshop – Association of Eastern Suburbs Historical Societies. Saturday 27 July in our Local History Room, at 9.30am – 4.30pm. Theme "Labelling and Copyright". Bring your own lunch. Morning and Afternoon Tea supplied.

Saturday 31st August. Keep this day free for "Fashion Through the Ages" being arranged by your Committee.

October General Meeting, Saturday 12th October at 1.30pm. Our guest speaker will be Rachel Faggetter who will speak on "Recollection and Memories of Schwerkolt Cottage and Garden" Rachel is the daughter of Pat Faggetter who was very involved in the acquisition and refurbishing of Schwerkolt Cottage and the gardens surrounding them.

December General Meeting, Saturday 14th December at 12 noon. We will have our annual Christmas Luncheon at 12 noon (Bring your lunch to share) followed by the General Meeting. At 1.30pm there will be the General Meeting. Our speaker is still to be arranged.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

This article from a document in the Archives should be of interest. It is an extract from "Reminiscences of old Residents"

Mr. J.F. Bawden. (Former Mitcham Station Master).

He came to Mitcham in 1936 from a country line in the Western District and did not like it at first, but stayed on and never regretted it. There were few people in the district at that time and Mitcham was a self-contained semi-country township. The station staff knew everyone because they brought periodical tickets. He and the Station-master frequently introduced young men to young women. Mr. Hutchinson (*Station Master*) was a very kind-hearted man who frequently lent men money for fares during the depression years, and was not often repaid.

One day he noticed a man sitting on a seat while several trains went through. Thinking something might be wrong, he touched the man on the shoulder and he fell off, apparently dead. They called a doctor who confirmed their suspicion, so they placed him on a stretcher and called an ambulance. After a short time he heard a noise and saw the man sitting up. He was subject to such fits of "blacking-out".

The driver of the bus to Vermont often came into the station office

to sit by the fire while waiting for trains and one occasion someone stole his bus.

One of the biggest jobs they had at the station was when Wirth's Circus came by special train. It occupied the whole goods siding and overlapped on the main line. They had to work all night to get the train unloaded and clear the line for the first trains in the morning.

Large quantities of coal and briquettes came from Anderson and Morwell for the brick and tile works.

In 1942 a young porter at Ringwood was playing with the levers in their signal box and threw one over as a train was passing. It was derailed and on carriage pulled down some of the overhead wiring. This made it impossible for electric trains to run on the section Melbourne – Mitcham for two days. People came to Mitcham by steam train, changed to electric to continue their journeys.

One shunter at Mitcham failed to notice one night that there were a number of trucks in the goods siding and waved a goods train into it. Before he could be stopped the incoming train had pushed the stationary trucks past the buffers and on to Mitcham Road. He had to put lights on them to avoid possible accidents.

During the war years land south of the station was auctioned. There was a marquee on the land and afternoon tea was provided, but few blocks sold. Later he bought one of them for £100.

Cataloguing the Collection - Current Status

Artifacts	Items catalogued 3011
Documents	Items catalogued 3770
Photographs	Items catalogued 2499

THANKS:

for the provision to the Society of space to display our photographs.

John Cybula, Estate Agent, 108 Canterbury Road Blackburn South.

REMEMBER

Box Hill Cemetery Records and Nunawading Gazette for

1964-1974 available on microfiche for research.

Nunawading and District Historical Society Local History

Collection - open from 10.30 am to 2.30 pm on Wednesday
Visitors welcomed. Ring 9873 4946 for an appointment at other times.

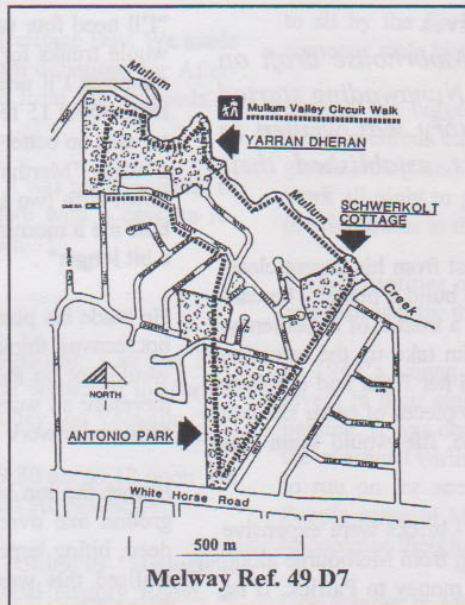
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Our Society on the Internet.

www.vicnet.net.au/~ndhsinc/



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 acknowledge the support
 from the
 City of Whitehorse*

Museum Accreditation Program

Map/Map/Map
 Accredited Museum

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Cataloguers at work.

Photograph shows the Wednesday group at work cataloguing artifacts, photographs and documents. They are from the left June Ventouras, Vicki Jones-Evans, Frances Warren, Barbara Gardiner, Barbara Keene and Julie Gamble.

***Nunawading and District Historical Society Inc.
 Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex.***

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