

Whitehorse Historical Society Inc.

Formerly Nunawading & District Historical Society Inc.

NEWSLETTER



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Series 11. No. 5 October 2003

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

From the President

What a busy time we Historical Society people have had since the General Meeting in August. All present at that meeting were very interested when the Guest Speaker, Rod Fraser told us of the history of "Champion of the Seas", one of the Black Ball Line Clipper ships. Rod knew his subject well as he has written a book on this ship and many present purchased a copy.

Thank you to Lyn Athan and Fred Smith, who volunteered their services to Newsletter Editor, Barbara Gardiner.

We still need two committee members - being on the Committee is an opportunity to get to know other members and the running of the Historical Society. The Committee meets on the first Monday night of each month at 7.30 pm.

Thank you to all who helped with the "Sausage Sizzle" on Father's Day. Although the preparation was an arduous task, the result was very worth while.

A warm welcome to our new members Warwick and Eleanor Dilley of Vermont South, Jean Neal and Wendy Robertson, both of Mitcham. Wendy has already begun to transcribe some of our Oral History tapes.

Another successful function was the "Wedding Days, etcetera, etcetera", beautifully presented by Ann Dixon. All present enjoyed learning of the origins of many wedding customs, and viewing the wedding gowns of bygone days.

We will need help from members on two occasions - on October 5th, between 2-4 pm at the Wisteria Party people are needed for setting up, supervising the children's activities and for helping with the afternoon teas.

On Sunday October 19th, the Whitehorse Spring Festival will take place at the Civic Centre. This is an interesting day with activities for all ages. We will be displaying photographs and other items in a marquee located in the gardens behind the Council Chambers. We need people to staff our display from 9am till 4pm. Ring me on 9874 4220 if you are available on either of these days.

The re-accreditation process is underway with the sub-committee meeting regularly and a visit from the Museum Accreditation Panel expected later in the year.

Judith Fry

Dates for your Diary

Sunday, October 5th, 2-4 pm

Our Annual Wisteria Garden Party

(A Dress-up Party for the Children)

With Animals on the Move,

• Brumbies Bush Band and lots of other attractions - see flyer and page 3.

Help needed on this day - ring 9874 4220

Saturday, October 11th,

Meeting at 1.30 pm.

At Local History Room, Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex.

Guest Speaker, Marjorie Morgan, OAM,

Subject - Prison Hulks of Port Phillip.

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.

Our Sewing Machine Collection and a Short History of Sewing Machines.

In our collection, we have thirteen sewing machines and three toy sewing machines, and I have had an interesting time researching their origins and place of manufacture. The internet has an amazing amount of information and photographs available and the Nunawading Library provided "Veteran Sewing Machines - A Collector's Guide by F. Brian Jewel", published in 1975, but still supplying important information.

Some of the very early machines in the collection are the Wheeler & Wilson Hand cranked Machine and the Wilcox and Gibb Treadle Machine. One unusual machine is Todd's "Champion of England" and we have a "Freya", made in Sweden by Husqvarna. Thanks to Ted Arrowsmith for his help in this research. We have several examples of Wertheim and Singer Machines and two Jones Machines.

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Can you imagine life without the sewing machine? Every garment and household item had to be hand sewn!

The early idea of a sewing machine came in 1790 when Thomas Saint of Smithfield, London, received patent no. 1764 for a machine for stitching leather. It was never manufactured and in the early nineteenth century, the idea of a sewing machine was being developed on both sides of the Atlantic. In the 1820's, in France, Barthélemy Thimonnier made a workable machine of wood. He later developed a machine made of steel and in 1841 was employed by a clothing factory which made uniforms for the French Army. An angry mob of hand-sewers destroyed the eighty machines in use with Barthélemy Thimonnier managing to escape to safety. In 1848, revolution broke out and his sewing machine factory was destroyed. He died in poverty in 1857.

During the 1840's, patents were granted to both British and American inventors. In 1844, a British patent was granted to John Fisher and James Gibbons for a two-thread shuttle machine, but it is unlikely that it was put to commercial use. In 1845, Elias Howe of Massachusetts was able to challenge five seamstresses in a clothing factory. He finished five seams in less time than the seamstresses took to

complete one seam! He was granted a patent in September 1846 but encountered great difficulty in establishing a market for his machine in the USA and England. Elias Howe later successfully sued other established manufacturers including Isaac Singer and Wheeler and Wilson for infringing his patent.

In August 1851, Isaac Merritt Singer whose design was an improvement on the earlier inventions, was granted a patent. (The patent model is in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.) Production of these machines began and with selling methods ahead of the times (including hire purchase), the success story of the Singer Sewing Machine began. In 1870, 181,260 machines were manufactured by the Singer Company.

In 1852, inventor Allen Benjamin Wilson combined with Nathaniel Wheeler and their company became the foremost producer of sewing machines in the USA until 1870.

The company was established in London in 1867, with machines priced from nine pounds to fifteen pounds.

In the mid 1850's, James Gibbs of Virginia set out to design a more functional and cheaper machine, and in 1857 formed a company with James Wilcox, which became Wilcox and Gibbs. Their treadle chain stitch machines sold for \$50 as compared to their competitors' price of \$100.

In England, William Jones founded his factory near Manchester in 1869, making both Howe and Wheeler & Wilson machines under licence. In 1872, William and his brother John patented a new design and began production in their new factory at Guide Bridge. They received royal patronage, the earlier model was labelled "as supplied to the Princess of Wales", later changed to "HM Queen Alexandra".

Next time you visit the museum, have a good look at our collection of sewing machines - and think about the inventors who devised the machines and the people who used them over a century and a half.

The sewing machine was really the first household labour saving device!

Barbara Gardiner

Vale Jean Gorsuch

We send our condolences to Judith Fry and her family following the death of her mother Jean. Jean had lived in Mitcham all her life, being a third generation Mitcham identity. She had been involved in many community groups and was a member of our Society for many years. She will be missed.

A Note from the Treasurer

A copy of our Annual Financial Report is enclosed for your information.

Thank you all very much for paying your subscriptions so promptly. There are only a few members who have not paid. Would please let us know if you do not wish to continue, or send us your subscriptions. A big thank you to the members who kindly added a donation.

Our sausage sizzle was a great success – thanks to all our hard workers. We made a very pleasing profit of \$960. Our "Wedding Days" afternoon also made a profit of \$358 and thanks to all who contributed to the Delicious Afternoon Tea.

Barbara Rogalski

Thanks to the following members:-

A big thank you to Vicki Jones-Evans from the Wednesday Working Group who donated a superseded computer. It has now been installed by Dan Jones with the assistance of Ted Arrowsmith and is ready for use for research queries and data entry. We are grateful to Dan for his willingness to undertake the technical maintenance of our computers. Thanks also to Norm Foun for his donation of "The Rug Hook Book"

Ann Dixon has curated the following display which could be of interest to our members:-
Princess Theatre Foyer, Spring Street Melbourne
27th September – 5th October 10am to 5pm
An exhibition of gowns from the National Trust Costume Collection. Free admission Phone 9656 9832

Working Bee – Saturday November 8th
From 9.30 onwards We hope to see many enthusiastic workers on this day. Apologies to Norm Foun and Rosalie Whalen who arrived on Saturday 13th September for the cancelled working bee.

Sunday 5th October 2-4 pm

Wisteria Garden Party

This should be a great day for the children so bring along your children and grandchildren or the neighbours. Dress up Party for the Children.

Attractions – Animal Farm, Brumbies Bush Band, Old Fashioned Picnic Races, Quoits, Skittles, Target Ball Throwing, Hula Hoops, Play Dough and Bubbles Everywhere!!

Sunday 19th October

Whitehorse Spring Festival

9am to 4 pm. Come along and staff our display and have an enjoyable time, as well.

Saturday 13th December –

General Meeting

Noon – Bring Lunch to share

Meeting to begin at 1.30

Lyn Athan and friends who entertain as a singing group will provide a musical afternoon for us and maybe we can have a singalong!

Congratulations!

The Box Hill Historical Society, Inc. is celebrating its 40th Anniversary at a Dinner at the Box Hill Town Hall on September 19th. We congratulate them on their achievements and wish them well in their application for Registration with the Museum Accreditation Program

Cataloguing the Collection - Current Status

Artifacts	3333	Items catalogued
Documents	4570	Items catalogued
Photographs	2883	Items catalogued

THANKS:

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

John Cybula, Estate Agent, 108 Canterbury Road Blackburn South.
Stockdale & Leggo, South Parade, Blackburn.

REMEMBER

Box Hill Cemetery Records and Nunawading Gazette for 1964-1974 available on microfiche for research.

Whitehorse Historical Society Local History Collection open 10.30 am to 2.30 pm on Wednesday. Visitors welcomed. Ring 9873 4946 for an appointment at other times.

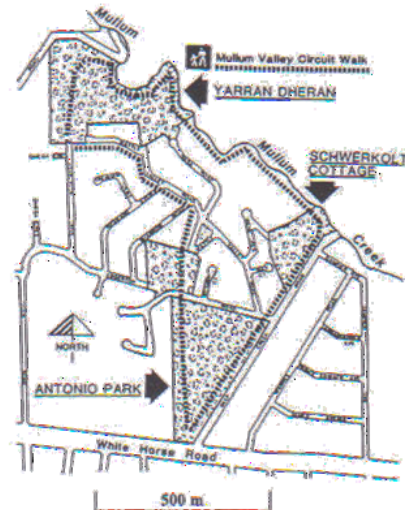
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Judith Fry 9874 4220
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Peter Simmenauer 9877 0141
Treasurer
Barbara Rogalski 9874 4668

Editor Barbara Gardiner

Distribution Val Riches

Our Society on the Internet.

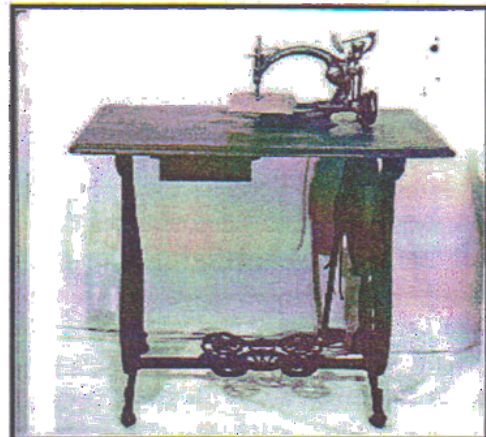
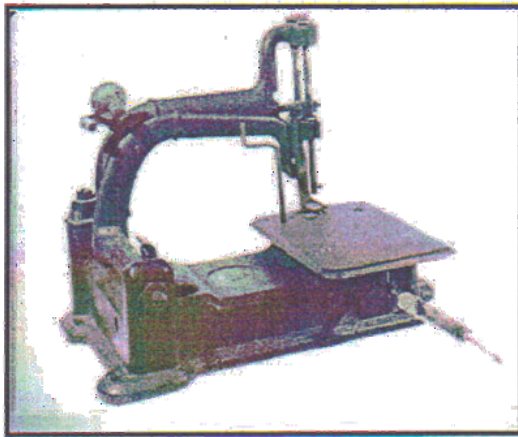
www.vicnet.net.au/~ndhsinc/



Whitehorse Historical Society, Inc.
acknowledge the support
from the
City of Whitehorse
Museum Accreditation Program

Museum Accredited
Accredited Museum

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These are our two oldest machines – both dated about 1870 – The Wheeler and Wilson is on the left and the Wilcox and Gibbs on the right. Both were manufactured in the USA.

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