

Whitehorse Historical Society Inc.

Formerly Nunawading & District Historical Society Inc.

1965 - 2006



NEWSLETTER



A0012235J
Series 14 no 2

ABN 44 352 041 634
April 2006

From the President

I can hardly believe how the time has flown since the start of our year. Since our last meeting and the wonderful talk by Mr Lindsay McKirdy we have been very busy and I have several items of news to report.

There have been a number of meetings with consultants who have been working on a draft report on the Museum complex and a set of recommendations in relation to future developments. In time the draft report will go to Council for consideration and we will keep members informed of the outcomes through our newsletter and or at our meetings. If you have any questions please feel free to talk to one of the WHS committee.

We have also had several visitors over the last couple of months. A new Councillor Pauline Richardson visited the Museum complex, met with some of the members and was very interested in all that happens here.

As part of the orientation week Linda Young the coordinator of Museum Studies at Deakin University, Burwood brought a group of graduate students commencing their Museum studies this year. One keen-eyed student spotted a 1930s bread-board in the cottage. As you know we try to keep only furnishings from the 19th C. in the Cottage so we were very pleased that this anomaly was brought to our attention.* Members answered questions from the students and also

[*Ed's note - The working group is aware that there is another item of furniture which is also 20thC. but this cabinet performs a vital function and we will have to live with it until we can find a suitable period replacement!]

asked them for ideas or solutions to various problems associated with display and storage. Another group of visitors, members of the Bungalook Nursery in Blackburn South visited us (and Collina Glen) and also sought our help. (See page 3 for details of their request).

We have also been busy with work on new displays, both the Lace displays and our own community display case has been recently changed. (See page 4 for display news)

Last but not least we are extremely grateful for a very generous donation from a well wisher who has requested anonymity. With their help new computing equipment has been purchased which will help tremendously with our ever expanding database related needs.

Just a reminder that if you miss any talks most of them are recorded and can be listened to at the Society's rooms. I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting. *Judith Fry*

Next meeting of the Society

Saturday 8th April 2006
1.30 pm

Guest speaker: Mr Ray Meagher,

A former councillor, a Mayor of Nunawading (1976/77) and a long-time resident Ray Meagher is also a builder. Ray will talk about his special interest in carpentry and construction saws and in particular those made by the American company of *Disston*. Ray's collection was featured recently at Museum Victoria in their series of popular Community Collection displays.

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

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.

William Henry Slater [b c. 1828 – d.23 May 1894] (part 2)

A summary of research by Yvonne Fitzmaurice, 2005

Continued from last issue (February 2006)

William Henry Slater's business activities required that he was often away from home. During his absences his wife spent many anxious hours keeping a careful watch for any wandering hostile aborigines. His granddaughter, Mrs Browning, remembered this story from her childhood.

As a practical distiller of oils he joined Mr Bosisto, a chemist of Richmond in the production of eucalyptus oil. Later William started his own distilling business and produced Eucalyptus Amygdalina oil, better known as 'Possum Brand'.

Its successful use at the Melbourne Hospital for medical purposes led it being regularly exported to London until his death in 1894. A more recent family story related that some oil was also sent to the USA, for the manufacture of paint.

About 1862 Mr. Slater began growing medicinal herbs. His first peppermint and lavender root stocks were obtained from England. With the help of a £25 Government Grant for establishing a new industry, he soon had nine acres of peppermint and one acre of lavender under cultivation. The venture became a financial success and in 1865 he exhibited a collection of essential oils in Dublin for which he gained a medal and a certificate. In 1866 he received a medal in Melbourne and another in Paris in 1867. Also, in 1866 at the Melbourne Exhibition he exhibited a sample of opium, the quality of which, after analysis, was considered equal to anything produced elsewhere.

At the Melbourne Centennial International Exhibition of 1888-89 he gained a First for his essential oils because the lavender oil was considered to be 'inferior only to the Mitcham (England) oil and superior to the French oil'. His peppermint oil was equally successful.

Unfortunately herbs grown for medicinal purposes only was unprofitable due to local prejudice and a general preference for German herbs. So, Slater also planted fruit trees which became even more profitable

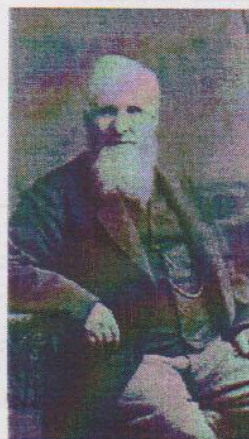
when he began to dry the fruit for the markets. His great grandson, Harry Pearce, who in 1924 owned the orchard, planted cherry trees and it was this fruit that was sold to Robertson's chocolate factory to manufacture 'Cherry Ripe' chocolate bars.

The evidence William gave to the 1890 *Royal Commission on Vegetable Products, Perfume Plants and Essential Oils* was detailed and valuable and 'with that unselfishness which was characteristic of him, he stated " I believe there would be room for a dozen people to start the same line, and more than that."

As the orchard continued to expand it was often visited for University Field Days. The Slaters welcomed all visitors to 'Mitcham Grove', but William gave an especial welcome to the young students from the College for whom he would ' unfold his vast stores of practical knowledge, both in the fields amongst his herbs, and in the laboratory among his preparations'. These Field Days were continued by William's descendants until the orchard was finally subdivided as building blocks in the early to mid twentieth century. YF

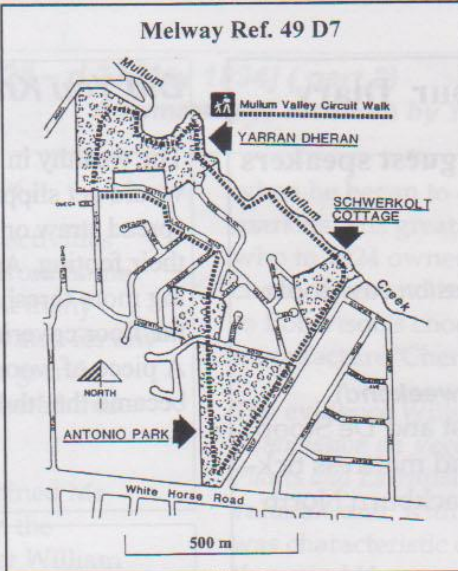
Main references:-



- Obituary ND7000
- Box Hill cemetery purchase of a family plot. ND 2000
- Site. Presbyterian West side, grave 6. Buried 25 May 1894
- Late resident of Barnes Road, Blackburn. Ref.'- Box Hill Cemetery records, including tombstone.
- Births Deaths & Marriages for Victoria.
- Photocopy of medallions won ND 2000
- Photocopies of photos of house ND2000
- Copy of H. W.S. ' evidence given before the 'Royal Commission on vegetable products, perfume plants and essential oils 1890' ND 3591

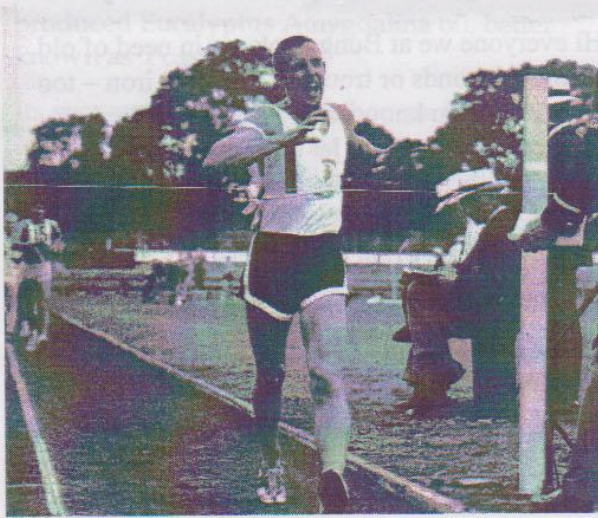


Mr William Henry Slater
Studio portrait
WHS collection

President
Judith Fry 9874 4220
Secretary
Peter Simmenauer 9877 0141
Asst. Secretary
Vicki Jones-Evans 9873 3383
Treasurer
June Ventouras 9878 1659
Editor Jay Miller
 8344 7158 (BH only)
 jmil@unimelb.edu.au
Distribution Barbara Gardiner
Our Society on the Internet.
 www.vicnet.net.au/~ndhsinc/
Local History Room 9873 4946




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

 accredited
 museum
 ISSN 1328-2395



Bob at Victorian Championships circa late 1960s

The 2006 Commonwealth Games are here!
 On March 1st Bob's achievement and contribution to athletics was recognised with his recent participation in the Queens Baton relay when he carried the baton from San Remo Jetty along Marine Parade to Bergin Grove, San Remo. Bob is pictured at left winning a race at the old Olympic Park near the current Vodaphone stadium note the officials' uniforms and the dirt track.
 We have recently installed a personal collection of athletic memorabilia collected by Bob Gardiner. An Olympic athlete and Commonwealth Games silver medallist, (walking 1970). Both Bob and his father Bert Gardiner, (Manager of the Athletics Team, Commonwealth Games 1958) have memorabilia collections. Bert's include programs for the Empire and Commonwealth Games back to the 1930s Bob's collection is primarily from the 1950s onwards.

Deadline for notices relating to heritage or any other activities for inclusion in the newsletter need to be supplied to the editor by the 12th of the month preceding the next meeting



Sender: Whitehorse Historical Society Inc. & Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex.
 Deep Creek Road, Mitcham, Vic, 3132 (Melway Ref. 49 D7) If undeliverable please return to P.O.Box 272 Mitcham, 3132, Vic

WHS Dates for your Diary

2006 meeting dates and guest speakers

Saturday 8 April

Ray Meagher History of *Disston* saw tools

Saturday 3 June

(NB date adjusted for long weekend)

David Best - History of Best and De Stoop establishment of the dye and mattress ticking factory, in Joseph St, Blackburn North

Saturday 12 August AGM

address by the Mayor Cr Sharon Ellis

Saturday 14 October

Margaret Rackham History of Nunawading Community Gardens at Forest Hill

Saturday 9 December

Christmas Celebration
Singing Group and afternoon tea.

2nd Saturday of alternate months are set
for our Working Bees.
Everyone welcome - morning tea included!

Cataloguing the Collection - Current Status

Artifacts	3796	Items catalogued
Documents	5434	Items catalogued
Photographs	3273	Items catalogued

THANKS!

Tremendous support has been given by

Penguin Dry Cleaners

Tunstall Square, 59 Tunstall Rd

Ph: 98426642

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REMEMBER

Whitehorse Historical Society
Local History Collection

open 10.30 am to 2.30 pm Wednesdays. Visitors welcome.
Ring 9873 4946 for an appointment at other times.

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

Did You Know?

The wealthy in the 1600s had slate floors that would get slippery in winter when wet, so they spread straw or 'thresh' on the floor to help keep their footing. As winter wore on, they kept adding more thresh until when you opened the door the floor covering would all start to slip outside. A piece of wood placed in the doorway hence became the 'thresh hold'

Contributed by Geoff Inskster

Can You help Bungalook Indigenous Nursery.

Hi everyone we at Bungalook are in need of old bathtubs, ponds or troughs (Not cast iron - too heavy!). If you know of any that are going begging could you please let us know - they would be gratefully accepted and we can arrange collection if not too far away. Alternatively they can be dropped off at our nursery at:

63 - 107 Fulton Road, Blackburn South

Equiries please call: Amanda Simpson 9878 3369
or email

Whitehorse Community Indigenous Plant Project:
<wcipp@yahoo.com.au>

Membership news

Just a reminder that all members are welcome to come along to the Wednesday working group. This is also a good time for people to drop in for self directed research

Oral History Project Update

We are pleased to report that the first batch of interviews and transcriptions have been completed.

Several others are in the pipeline but the working group are still interested to know of anyone else who may be willing to be interviewed. They must be migrants preferably after 1945 and perhaps as recently as last year.

Please contact Peter Simmenauer or Valda Arrowsmith if you know of anyone suitable

See backpage for contact details