

# The Whitehorse Historical Society Newsletter



Series 21 no 1 - January-February 2013

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## OP SHOPS . . . AND ONE IN PARTICULAR

by A.Y. Fitzmaurice

**For** identifying historical artifacts, opportunity shops (op shops) can provide a wealth of information, owing to the knowledge gained by staff who deal with a huge variety of goods from all periods. The Yellow Pages lists a dozen or so op shops in the Nunawading area. These, like all other op shops, charity shops, thrift shops or hospice shops around the world have been formed by charitable institutions where the profits are used to help those in need, whether they be human or animal.

If the Google/Wikipedia websites have been correctly understood, the history of op shops is an old one, and one that appears to have originated in England. The town of Rochdale, in Greater Manchester, claims to have opened the first cooperative in Toad Lane in 1844. From this humble beginning the op shops have evolved. The idea spread and in 1899, to raise funds, the Wolverhampton Society for the Blind opened the same type of shop, selling goods made by the blind. There were probably several similar successful fundraising activities during World War I, but only one – by the Red Cross – is freely documented.

Shortly after World War II the first Oxfam Charity Shop began trading in Broad Street, Oxford, opening in February 1948. Following the success of Oxfam, charities of all persuasions saw the benefit of opening their own stores and since then

they have proliferated throughout the world. In the City of Whitehorse there are many successful opportunity shops.

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The following is an edited version of a talk given to Rotary in March of 2011 by one of the Blackburn South shop managers; she spoke of the work done by the volunteers, their camaraderie both with each other and with their customers, and in particular their fondness for the regulars, of whom there are many.

She said, 'A different person is appointed as Volunteer Manager for each of the five and a half days we are open. I am the Monday Manager and work with six other volunteers, four of whom work a half day and two, a full day. We enjoy our Mondays together and frequently see each other socially. Each week we donate a set amount for our annual girls' night out at Christmas.

'Regarding the shop, we have developed a system where we sort out and grade all the goods. The suitable donated clothing is priced, and on each swing-tag there is placed a coloured dot, using a different colour for each month. Then we know at a glance how long each garment has been in the shop. After six to eight weeks the older stock is removed, bagged and given to the Diabetes Society, after which the racks are replenished. Everything is carefully hung in different categories and sizes, but it doesn't stay that way for very long! As a result, one of the volunteers tidies them every Monday, putting things where they should be and withdrawing unsuitable stock.

(continued p 3)



The Rotary Op-shop in South Blackburn

**Next meeting: Saturday, 9 February, 1.30 p.m.  
GENERAL MEETING**

**Speaker:**

**Don Gibb - 'What is good local history?'**

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT – VICKI JONES-EVANS

*Dear Members*

I hope you all had a peaceful New Year and are looking forward to 2013.

A December meeting in the Visitor Centre went very well despite the heat. Dr Linda Young gave us a most interesting talk on House Museums in Melbourne and we were able to add a couple to her list. Considering our population size and area, it is quite amazing that we have so many house museums. Schwerkolt Cottage was of course on the list, and seeing it among the many gave us inspiration to continue our work. The talk also highlighted some of the problems these museums face fitting in to the modern world. Parking and traffic are large problems for many city houses – such as Como, which is currently closed because of these issues.



The house at Como



1935  
Fashion

After a rest over Christmas, I gained enthusiasm from visiting a couple of exhibitions that are on at the moment. The first trip was to Upwey, to the Burrinja Gallery, to see 'Fashion Meets Fiction: The Darnell Collection'. I first saw garments from the Darnell Collection in Bendigo a few years ago and was very impressed. This time the Burrinja Gallery, in concert with the Darnell Collection and the Eastern Regional Libraries Corporation, is presenting a collection in tribute to the National Year of Reading (2012). The costumes are an interpretation of what characters from popular fiction may have worn. There are about 27 characters/costumes, including Lucinda from *Oscar and Lucinda* (1850s) to Carrie Bradshaw in *Sex and the City* (1990s). It is on until February 17. I have enjoyed visiting the gallery before, when it showed aboriginal art, and I can also recommend the café there.

The other exhibition I enjoyed, which will have finished as you receive this, was the Narnia exhibition, celebrating the C.S. Lewis books, in the Pavilion at Docklands. This was a more hands-on affair – we entered through the wardrobe doors, passed through the fur coats in the wardrobe and into a snow-covered (fake) pine (fake) forest clearing. My 18-month-old granddaughter had a lovely time in the 'snow'.

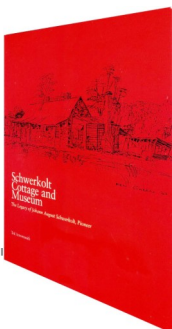
The exhibits included costumes from the recent films, a suit of chain mail to lift and see how heavy it was (very!), and swords in scabbards to lift for the same reason – they also are heavy. My granddaughter was most taken with the catapult demonstration of a 'ball' (her favourite word) fired into a net. After five balls, the demand was for 'more' (second-favourite word).



The  
Narnia  
Exhibition

I hope such inspirational exhibitions will help with our work this year at the Schwerkolt Complex.

*Vicki Jones-Evans*



**Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum:  
The Legacy of Johann August Schwerkolt, Pioneer.  
By E. Arrowsmith. B5; 44 pages, Illustrated**

**\$5.00**

### Cataloguing Statistics

Photographs	-	3948
Artefacts	-	4533
Documents	-	6465
Visitors to Museum Nov/Dec	-	261





## December Meeting: HOUSE MUSEUMS

Our visiting Speaker for the December Meeting was Dr. Linda Young, Lecturer in Cultural History and Museum Studies at Deakin University, her topic being House Museums around the Melbourne area.

House museums are never easy to establish, as they generally need much restoration for public viewing. The complete picture needs authenticity, accessibility, and presentation. Sometimes the houses are not that interesting, but accommodate an outstanding Collection, such as the Johnson Collection in East Melbourne. The house and its contents were left to the people of Victoria. There are four paid staff and numerous volunteers. To avoid restricted parking – a problem for many house museums – visitors are bussed to the house from nearby Hilton Hotel.

We all love to visit Captain Cook's House in the Fitzroy Gardens (although Cook never lived there). He probably visited his parents there, and the vendor in the 1930s made the most of this tenuous connection. It was acquired and re-erected – much altered – in 1934, in time to celebrate the centenary of settlement in Victoria.

Another example is the Iron House, a portable house built and packaged in England and shipped out to the colonies to be erected on the gold fields to ease the shortage of accommodation.

Such a building has been preserved in South Melbourne. Mother is Latrobe's Cottage just outside the Botanical Gardens, but a bit more 'up market'. After WW11, Nissen Huts (not very popular type of housing) were erected to accommo-



Iron house  
in South Melbourne

date new migrants.

'Ziebell's Farmhouse', in Thomastown, is a typical German farmhouse of the mid-nineteenth century, designed with a timber-shingled roof and 61cm walls to protect it against snow. The bluestone blocks used to build the house were quarried on the property.

Our own, Schwerkolt Cottage, is another German-designed house. It is an outstanding restoration house of a similar period. The layout of the house is typical – all doors opening on to a veranda (i.e. no internal doors), and with a well in the garden.

We are indeed fortunate to have people who dedicated their time and expertise to ensure all these properties are preserved for future generations.



The Johnson House in  
East Melbourne



Ziebell's Farmhouse,  
Thomastown

Valerie Marshall

## OP SHOPS . . . AND ONE IN PARTICULAR

*Continued from page 1*

This keeps the shop well presented, fresh and interesting.

'Because we receive so much clothing, the surplus has to go into storage. We sort it ready to be sealed into zipped, striped bags – slacks in one, skirts in another, and so on. The handles are labelled with the contents – whether for summer or winter, ladies or men – and the bags are placed on the storage shelves. This method makes it easier for us to find what we need when restocking the shop.

'Unfortunately, we receive a lot of things that cannot be sold, such as very dirty, greasy frying pans and saucepans, other dirty cooking utensils and appliances, plus very old, ragged, dirty clothing and shoes that are worn-out and smelly. There are also broken articles, and some goods that contain cobwebs and spiders, all of which are thrown into a large waste bin. Handling these things is not very pleasant and is quite frustrating at times, but luckily the majority of the donations are clean. One of our volunteer ladies has worked for many years in the antique business and we put aside anything we think is of value for her to price. It can be very interesting to hear the history of some of these treasures.

'We receive a lot of books. Another of our ladies sorts and prices them for the shop; anything unsaleable she puts into the

waste-paper pick-up. However, when there are too many for the shelves we have a half-price sale, which always goes very well.

'A little over eight years ago the Blackburn South shop opened, and since then more than \$400,000 has been raised. A large part of this money has gone to Box Hill Hospital, where it has been used for refurbishing departments and purchasing large items of medical equipment. The aim and hope is to continue these annual donations.

'Apart from donating the money made at the shop, we also give goods to other organisations where needed. This is greatly appreciated and is a service to the community. Surplus crockery, linen, blankets and bedspreads are donated to the Eastern Emergency Relief Network, which in turn gives them to people going through hard times. The stained blankets and old sleeping bags are given to the RSPCA, who are very grateful for these items for their animals.

'It is very enjoyable work – we often laugh at some of the things that arrive at our door. Sometimes it is a frustrating job, but mostly a rewarding one – especially when we hear how much money has been raised and how it is distributed. It has become a large part of my life and I really feel like I am doing something worthwhile.'

Sources: Talk by Irene Lewis to Rotary; [Wikipedia.org/wiki/Charity\\_shop](http://Wikipedia.org/wiki/Charity_shop)

## VALE

MARIE JACK 9/11/1920 –14/8/2012

Marie was the wife of Walter Jack (dec.), who was born in Berlin. His parents, Mary (who inherited Schwerkolt Cottage) and Emil, were on their way from the USA to Melbourne via Germany when World War 1 broke out. They eventually returned to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Marie and Walter married and visited Australia in 1990. He was thrilled to visit the cottage built by his grandfather, August Schwerkolt, and that it was being so well cared for and cherished by the community.

After Walter died, Marie continued to make annual donations to our society.

She was a gracious and lovely lady and will be sadly missed.

*Rosalie Whalen*



## Whitehorse Historical Society Dates for your Diary

Meetings are held at the Local History Room  
Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex.

**Saturday, 9 February 2013, 1.30pm**  
**General Meeting**

*Speaker Don Gibb – 'What is good local history?'*

**Saturday, 13 April, 1.30pm**  
**General Meeting**

*Speaker Jim Connor – 'Earth Building'*

**Saturday, 20 April, 1.30pm**  
**AOEHS meeting**

*Barbara Rogalski –  
'An artist's impression of Schwerkolt Cottage'*

## Working Bees 2013

**Please make a diary note and join us  
on the day.**

Working Bees commence at 9.30 a.m. and  
finish around 12 noon with a great morning  
tea.

**Saturday 9 March      Saturday 14 September**

**Saturday 11 May      Saturday 9 November**

**Please come and help even if you can only  
offer an hour of your time.**

From the

# Nunawading Reporter

December 4, 1953

## HOMES GET SEWERAGE

### NUNAWADING EXTENSIONS

**Extensions to the sewerage  
system in six suburbs in Mel-  
bourne including Nunawad-  
ing have been approved by the  
Melbourne and Metropolitan  
Board of Works.**

Costing more than £130,000 they  
will be financed from the board's  
loan funds.

Announcing this the Nun-  
awading representative on the  
board (Cr. C. F. Rooks) said today  
that work at Nunawading would  
make the sewerage available to  
87 new homes.

The extensions would be in an  
area bounded by Heath street,  
Main street, Canterbury road, Ron-  
ley street, and Eustace street.

## BLACKBURN AUTO SERVICE

(Austin Etheridge, Prop.)

99 WHITEHORSE ROAD, BLACKBURN  
Your AUTHORISED Local AUSTIN AGENT



Offer to

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**SATURDAY MORNING**

Lube Service is now available

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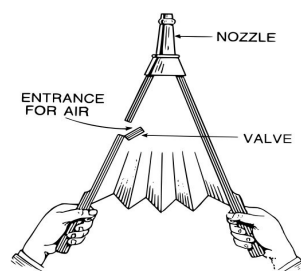
REMEMBER — IT'S AUSTIN'S FOR

*Austin*





NA1346  
A pair of wooden bellows with metal studs, leather inset and metal funnel. The diagram on the right shows the principle on which they worked



NA1377  
48cm x 60cm (iron) Fountain Kettle, inscribed 'Clark's 4 gall'

Enormous black cast iron kettle with lid. (Correctly known as a Fountain) Handle has a hook for hanging on a chain over a fire. The contents are accessed via a brass tap on the brass extension near its base.

It came from George Cox's grandmother's farm at Toolern Vale. There it sat on the open fire in the kitchen and was a continual source of hot water.



NA969.1-69  
These are the building blocks mentioned in the article below – on show in the bedroom at Schwerkolt Cottage. They originated with the wooden building blocks designed by Friedrich Fröbel, the creator of the kindergarten system., although they did not achieve popularity until the 1880s. The trademark *Richters Anker-Steinbaukästen*, which these are, dates from 1895.

## FROM THE COLLECTION . . . . .

### A German Visitor

**O**n the second-last working Wednesday last year a visitor enquired whether she could look at the Cottage. As the lady was from Germany, I showed her the Cottage, and when we visited the children's room she immediately exclaimed over the building blocks on the floor. They were 'Anker' brand, and called Steinbaukasten – which means 'building-blocks into a castle'. Her husband and son both played with them as children and both became engineers.

When we got to the museum I showed her Mary Schwerkolt's playing cards. They're marked Bremen – a city in northern Germany. The visitor explained that Bremen has a migration museum, and when you buy a ticket you are given the name of a migrant. Throughout your tour you find more details about 'your' migrant, until on leaving the museum you learn to which country your migrant migrated.

*Vicki Jones-Evans*



Mary Schwerkolt's  
playing cards (1910)

## WHS Committee Contacts

**President:** Vicki Jones-Evans  
9873 3383

**Vice-President:** Peter Simmenauer  
9877 0141

**Secretary:** Rachael Cottle  
9724 9298

**Treasurer:** Bob Gardiner  
9874 6592

## Newsletter Team:

Chris Gray  
Bettina Stevenson  
Wendy Standfield  
Valda Arrowsmith OAM  
Vicki Jones-Evans  
Peter Simmenauer

## WHS website:

[www.vicnet.net.au/~ndhsinc/](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~ndhsinc/)  
[facebook.com/whitehorsehistory](https://facebook.com/whitehorsehistory)

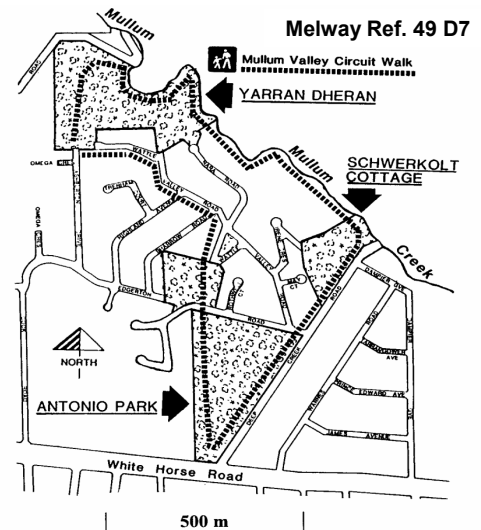
## Email:

[whitehorsehistory@hotmail.com](mailto:whitehorsehistory@hotmail.com)

## Postal Address:

P.O. Box 272  
MITCHAM VIC 3132

**Local History Room: (03) 9873 4946**



**Copy deadline for next WHS Newsletter: Wednesday, 13 March 2013**



## The Whitehorse Historical Society Inc.

### 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.

## POD

Place of Deposit  
Accredited by the  
PRO Victoria

CITY OF



*The Whitehorse  
Historical Society, Inc.  
acknowledges the  
support of the  
City of Whitehorse.*



## REMEMBER

**Whitehorse Historical Society**  
**Local History Collection & Place of Deposit**  
Open 10.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. 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.

**Sender:** Whitehorse Historical Society Inc. & Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex  
Deep Creek Road, Mitcham, VIC 3132  
If undeliverable, please return to P.O. Box 272 Mitcham, VIC 3132

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