



When Blackburn North hit the “Biggs” time

FOR several years the Great Train Robber, Ronnie Biggs, lived in Blackburn North as Terry Cooke with his wife, Charmaine, and their three children. They lived at 52 Hibiscus Road, while “Terry” worked at the Channel 9 studios and Charmaine worked at the Bowater-Scott factory in Box Hill South. Two of the children attended Blackburn Primary School.



The Great Train Robbery took place on 8 August 1963, on the Glasgow to London mail train; the amount stolen was 2.6 million English pounds (Aus\$7.3m). Biggs was jailed for 30 years, but in 1965 he escaped and found his way to Australia and his family.



Charmaine Biggs and two of their three children

On the morning of October 17 1969, Ronnie Biggs fled from his Blackburn North home for Rio de Janeiro in Brazil – and at about 8pm of the same day police raided the home.

Ronnie eventually returned to England and spent several years in prison before being released on August 7 2009. He died in December 2013 aged 84. Charmaine remained in Melbourne.

The house in Blackburn North was last auctioned on March 29 2014 and sold for \$805,000.

Vicki Jones-Evans

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Dear Members

WE have had four more of our Wednesday workers retire. The first was Valda, after many years of service to the Society. Thank you, Valda, for your valuable contribution over the years to our Wednesday Working Group.

Of our young volunteers, two have moved to paid employment. Best wishes to Amir and Jesse in their new jobs and to Tara, who has taken up an internship and further studies.

In April, Rachael and I represented the Society at the official opening of the Forest Hill Police Station. After the launch by the Assistant Police Minister, we had morning tea followed by a conducted tour around the building.

Thank you to member Tim Shambrook for his interesting talk and visual presentation on Vermont South at our April meeting.

Blackburn Red Cross will be selling tea, coffee, biscuits and scones at our Heritage Family Day this year as we do not have the number of volunteers needed to run the kitchen as in the past. The time



Rachael and Vicki at the official opening of Forest Hill Police Station on Springvale Road

for face-painting and the magician will be extended to the full five hours in response to feedback from last year. We have applied for a City of Whitehorse Community Grant.

The June meeting will start at 1pm so that we may utilise the Visitor Centre before the Museum is opened to the public.

Vicki Jones Evans

Your Committee in Action

- An updated Disaster Plan has been submitted to MAP.
- Vicki and Rachael as coordinators are organising the Heritage Family Day.
- New volunteer Jesse is doing pro bono graphic design work, creating a new logo.
- Pat Richardson has been appointed Member of Whitehorse Heritage Steering Committee.

April Meeting Report

Growing up with Vermont

PICTURES

RIGHT: The Shambrook family in 1919, shortly after moving to Vermont

BELOW: Pannam's general store c1947



WHAT a wonderful afternoon we had at the meeting on Saturday April 9 thanks to Tim Shambrook's PowerPoint demonstration and his talk, which travelled over 150 years of settlement in Vermont.

We followed the Shambrook family's connection with Vermont, starting with their move from Warracknabeal in Western Victoria after a young family member had a run-in with the law and was sentenced to a spell at the Tally Ho Boys Training Farm. The family made the move to Vermont so that they could be near and support him; the sentence expired, but the move became permanent.

Tim's talk ranged over a broad canvas, seamlessly entwining his own family history with that of the community they had moved into. He spoke of a school being needed to educate the orchardists' children (see our article in the April newsletter). One was built, which was almost immediately too small. Even its eventual extension proved inadequate, as the following news item of May 1907 attests.

The new room at Vermont state school proved all too small for the concert in aid of the treat and prize fund on the 16th inst. The varied programme kept the audience of old scholars, parents and friends Interested till after 10 p.m. in spite of the crush.

He told of the establishment of the first Anglican church and of its first vicar, Thomas McKeon, who – although serving for only three years before his early death – was much loved by his parish and contributed

a great deal to the burgeoning community, including the starting of a scout troop. McKeon Hall – which still stands today – was opened in 1925 and named after him.

His PowerPoint presentation included fascinating photographs of early Vermont, its orchards, its community, its sports teams (which included his father and grandfather) and the St Luke's Youth Club, started by his father in 1957 – as well as landmarks such as the Mechanics Institute, Pannam's store and the Wunderlich Tileworks.

By always returning to the evolution of the Mitcham Road/Canterbury Road intersection over the years, Tim enabled his audience to appreciate a sense of continuity in his history. We thank him for addressing us, and allowing us the use of images from his presentation to accompany this article.

Judith Fry



Welcome

Please welcome Jesse Chapman, who is doing some graphic design for us and is currently working on an update of the Society logo.

THE SAD TALE OF HARRIET SLATER



Old Nag's Head Pub, where the inquest was held.
Photo taken c1935

WHILE Pat Richardson was searching on line recently she found an article from the *South Eastern Gazette*, in Mitcham, Surrey (England) dated April 5 1859.

It was entitled SUICIDE AT MITCHAM UNDER MELANCHOLY CIRCUMSTANCES, and the paper was reporting on the inquest, held at the Nags Head public house, on the death of Harriet Slater, 27, wife of William Henry Slater.

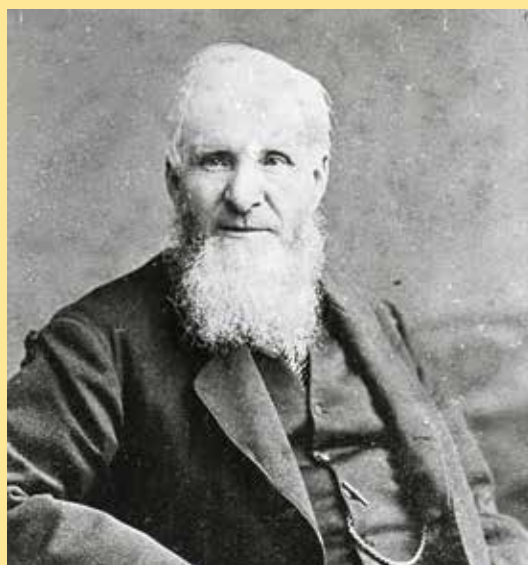
Harriet was found to have committed suicide whilst suffering "Temporary derangement"; her husband had deserted her and their infant child in August of the previous year. He was said to have gone to Australia with the daughter of a "beer-house keeper named Cresswell".

After he left, Harriet returned to service in the house where she had been employed before her marriage,

Harriet's final letter, in which she wrote that she hoped to live with her husband and their dear child once more, was addressed to her "dearly beloved husband, from his poor wife" and was dated on the child's first birthday, 27 March. Enclosed with this was a letter she had received from William written from the Jersey Islands in September, and signed "[love] from your wicked, cruel husband, Wm. Henry Slater". She swallowed arsenic. It was not reported as to whereabouts of the child.

Vicki Jones-Evans

SOURCE: <https://mitchamhistorynoteswordpress.com/2015/10/24/1859-suicide-of-harriet-slater/>



William Henry Slater established a farm in Mitcham, Victoria, that was similar to the "physic gardens" near his English home where he had worked; he named his house Mitcham Grove, probably after the house in Mitcham, Surrey, owned by banker Henry Hoare. It is considered that William was instrumental in the naming of our township of Mitcham.

FROM THE COLLECTION . . .

NA1981

Large curved blade with wooden handle used for harvesting lavender.

Inscription: W.A.Tyzac Co.Ltd. Sheffield England. It is thought to have been used on the Slater Herb Farm North Blackburn. In the Supplementary File is a photo of the harvesting of lavender which appeared in the "Age" Newspaper in 2004, plus the Permission to display the photo.

Wood and steel discoloured. Has been cleaned and painted with "Pentrol".



From the

Blackburn & Mitcham Reporter

CIRCULATING IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF BLACKBURN AND MITCHAM AND DONCASTER.

Volume 45 Number 23

Friday, 17 June 1932

Price Twopence

MITCHAM.

NEW METHOD OF ROAD CONSTRUCTION.

Of the amount allocated by the Country Roads Board for the resealing of White Horse road, about £300 was saved by economical working, and this is now being spent on the construction of the section between McDowall street and Thomas street on Crabhole Hill. The work is being carried out under the supervision of the shire engineer (Mr. N. G. Roeszler) and a minimum of inconvenience is caused to the travelling public. A method of construction new to this shire has been adopted, which is claimed to be cheaper than the old method and to provide a more compact road. The finished thickness of the new section will be 10 inches, comprising three inches of ashes, four inches of waterbound macadam and topped with three inches of modified macadam. At the shire council meeting on Monday evening, the engineer, in reply to Cr. Halliday's question, stated that he did not intend using the pitchers previously used on the edges of the construction, as they had a tendency to water log the road, and their disadvantages in this respect far outweighed any advantage they may have as an edge protection.



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DISTRICT COURT

THURSDAY, JUNE 9, 1932.

Before Messrs. J. Sneddon, J. R. Kefford, J. McCaskill, A. L. Wright and E. F. G. Hodges, J's.P.

RENEWAL OF LICENCE REFUSED

R. J. Cooper, 14 Alfred street, Blackburn, applied for a renewal of his licence to drive a motor vehicle, which was suspended last November. Constable Costello opposed the application. He said that applicant's conduct was not such as to make him a fit person to hold one; he had been a constant visitor to the hotel.

Mr. Sneddon said the application would be adjourned for three months, and if his conduct was satisfactory in that time it might then be granted.

EXPIRED PERIODICAL TICKET.

Alexander T. Hazel, Ross road, Croydon, was charged with having ridden between Croydon and Mitcham railway stations on May 7 on a periodical ticket, the date of which had expired.

Stationmaster C. Whifelow said that defendant passed through the barrier with some other youths, and merely flashed his ticket. Witness asked him for it, and when examined it proved to have been one that was available for a week only at the end of January.

Fined 40/-, costs 12/6.

DRUNKEN MOTORIST.

Dairymple, a storekeeper at Montrose, was charged with having been drunk while in charge of a motor car on Mitcham road, Mitcham.

Constable D. L. Provis said that about 10 p.m. on June 8 he went to Mitcham road, and saw defendant in charge of a motor truck. He was sitting at the wheel trying to drive it out of a bog. He had run into a telegraph post, and the mudguard and lamp were severely damaged. Witness made him stand on the footpath, but he was very drunk and could hardly stand. His speech was very muddled.

Defendant pleaded guilty, and said it was a wet night, and he had had four or five wines, which must have gone to his head.

Fined £5, in default 14 days' imprisonment. A stay of seven days was granted.

VERMONT.

SCOUT NOTES.

On Tuesday night preliminary arrangements were made at the parents' meeting for the annual scout dance to be held early in August. On Friday collectors' badges were presented to George Kiddle and John Livermore, and Freddy Hamilton and Normy Wood, who had passed their tenderpads the previous week, took their promise and became members of the pack. The pack met again on Saturday afternoon, when the time was spent in playing smugglers and coastguards, kicking the tin and stalking the deer, while the scouts had tea in the hut and spent the evening in games and tests. Frank Hunt passed his first class conventional signs and Harry Collinson his second class compass tests.



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Farewell Valda

VALDA Arrowsmith was elected in August 1977 as East Ward Councillor to the Nunawading Council.

In 1985–87 she served as Chairperson, and in 1988 became Mayor of the City of Nunawading. Our Society's Work Room was opened by Valda on 24 July 1988.

Valda recalls that in 1993 a member of the Parks and Recreation Department attempted to increase attendance at Schwerkolt Cottage by fencing the area around it. The Council rejected the idea!

In 1994, Valda became President of the Nunawading Historical Society, and soon Museum Victoria had established a program to guide both professional and volunteer organisations in managing collections of a standard high enough to achieve accreditation. In 1997 a subcommittee began to work towards reaching the same high standards as those around the state, and we were delighted when, in 2000, Valda accepted our Certificate of Accreditation from the Minister for Arts, the Honourable Mary Delahunty (see picture below).

Valda's husband, Ted Arrowsmith, joined the Wednesday Working Group in 2000 and installed our original computers. Ted also wrote a book that told stories of the Schwerkolt family and the Museum; WHS had become a family affair!

Valda has finally had to draw a line under her regular involvement with the Society, and already we miss her greatly. Her willingness to help and her deep knowledge of local history will not easily be equalled.

Barbara Gardiner



Whitehorse Historical Society 2016 WORKING BEES

Please make a diary note and join us on the day.
Working Bees commence at 9.30am and finish around 12 noon with morning tea.

Saturday 3 September

Saturday 12 November

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

Whitehorse Historical Society DIARY DATES

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

Saturday, 11 June

1.00pm General Meeting

Ross McMullin (Author):

The Remarkable Pompey Elliott

Saturday, 13 August

1.00pm Annual General Meeting

Anne Payne (Whitehorse Citizen of the Year):

Volunteering

2016 speakers will include:

Heritage Family Day Sun Sept 11

- ***Sat 8 October: Lorinda Cramer***
- ***Sat 10 December: Bob Gardiner***

Statistics

Photographs catalogued	-	4209
Artefacts catalogued	-	4760
Documents catalogued	-	7102
Visitors to museum March/April	-	375
 Facebook 'likes' to April	-	581

THE RELIGIOUS BUS

(from the September 1975
WHS Newsletter)



SHORTLY after the war Box Hill Baptist Church began to form a new church in North Blackburn. Because there were no local halls and no building permits available, Mr Charles Hemming organised Sunday School meetings on street corners; he had three separate meetings in the area, beginning at 9.30am, which he followed up with similar meetings in other areas during Sunday afternoon. The church bought a second-hand bus to act as a movable meeting place – and the officers wondered at the strange happenings with that bus. It regularly did its Sunday School work without mishap, but if used for anything else, such as a picnic or an outing,

it regularly broke down and had to limp or be towed back home. During discussion, one officer said, “We bought and dedicated that bus for Sunday School work, and it does it without trouble, but as soon as it is used for anything else it is stuck up. We must therefore restrict it to Sunday School work only”. The others could not understand how metaphysics could affect the running of a mechanical engine, but the fact was indisputable.

Some time later, they discovered

that Mr Hemming had forgotten it needed oil and had been running with an empty sump – after travelling more than three or four miles the engine overheated and seized!

The bus was used for Sunday School evening services also until the first hall was built for the new church. It was then moved to the backyard of a house near Nunawading Station, as a meeting place for what has developed into a pleasant Mitcham Baptist Church.

Anonymous

MOTOR CYCLE NUISANCE

THE motor cycle nuisance in Central Road was the subject of a complaint by a resident of Central Road, Tunstall, to the Blackburn and Mitcham Shire Council at

its meeting on Monday evening. It is stated that almost every evening, from about 7pm until midnight, Central Road becomes a race track for youths on motor cycles, who go backwards and forwards at top speed, with exhausts open, and sometimes without [any] lights .

It was decided to refer the matter to the Blackburn and Mitcham police, and to provide a stop-watch to the Blackburn police for the purpose of checking speeds.

*from the Blackburn and Mitcham Reporter
3 February 1928, edited by Yvonne Fitzmaurice*



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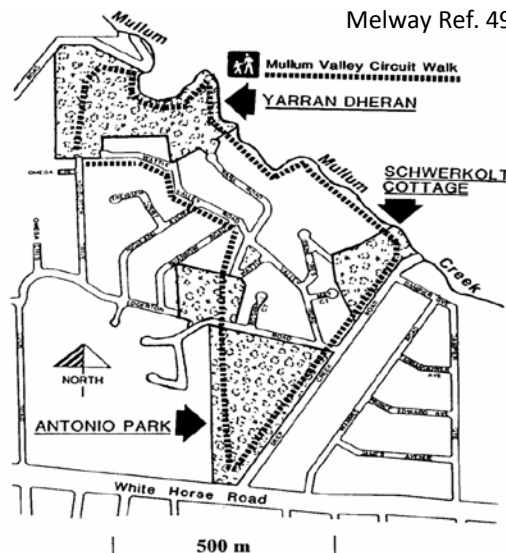
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Copy Deadline for next WHS Newsletter: Wednesday, 6 July

The Whitehorse Historical Society Inc.

Mission Statement & Acknowledgement of Country

"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 City of Whitehorse area."

"In the spirit of reconciliation, Whitehorse Historical Society Inc. acknowledges the Wurundjeri people as the traditional owners of the land now known as the City of Whitehorse, and pays respect to its elders past and present."



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available on microfiche for research.

The Whitehorse
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