

GROWING FRUIT IN WWII



NP2719 Orchardist Robert Collier with his son Fred pick fruit on the orchard.

IN the WHS archives there is a file of carbon copied letters, now faded and fragile, that show the difficulties experienced by the fruit farmers who remained at home in the essential industry of producing food during WW2. The majority of the letters are written by Gilbert E Handasyde JP, a Wantirna orchardist who was appointed as the Honorary Secretary of the Fruit Growers & Primary Producers' Defence League of Australia (hereafter referred to as the League). Later, in 1946, he became the secretary of the Allied Primary Producers Committee.

The League commenced in 1940 as a new entity drawn from new members and smaller groups that catered to the industry. The main driving force behind its formation was the apathy of the SFA¹ about the new wartime Acquisition Act (introduced by the Menzies government and dropped by the Curtin government in 1944 when free marketing was re-established.)

The earlier years of the League were largely concerned with recognition and maintenance of membership. Later, when the wartime shortages became a priority, a more practical approach was needed owing to equipment wearing out and needing either repair or replacement.

Branch meetings were held regularly, usually quarterly; and an annual conference rotated between the various Branches. These meetings were well attended and were usually very vocal – sometimes rowdy when a member of parliament attended! The League members were galvanised with anger over the Acquisition Act and the attitude of the Pear and Apple Marketing Board to their problems; both of these controlled every aspect of their livelihood, from production to marketing. Severe financial hardship occurred when the payment for the year's produce was delayed by twelve months. The anger of the farmers was palpable and they were adamant that both Board and the Act should be abolished. This battle continued for a number of years until 1944, when the Act was abolished in all states except Tasmania and Western Australia.

(continued on page 7)

¹ SFA thought to be either *Statutory Funding Agreement*, which did, and still does, deal with food production as part of its portfolio, or *State Fruit Acquisition*, which was put up by the Federal Government under Mr Cameron, Commerce Minister, and supported Mr Edmond Hogan of the Victorian Parliament.

NEXT MEETING

General Meeting 1pm Saturday, 11 February

In the event of a Total Fire Ban (or temperature over 33°) the meeting will be cancelled

Ned Kelly 1906



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Dear Members

HERE'S hoping you had a great family Christmas and that 2017 is a good year for you.

Towards the end of the year the Whitehorse Historical Society (i.e. Pat, Kath and Vicki) attended the "Wash-up" meeting for Heritage Week 2016 at the Whitehorse Civic Centre to discuss what was good – or otherwise – about the Heritage Week activities. Some changes need to be made; but on the whole the week was deemed a success.

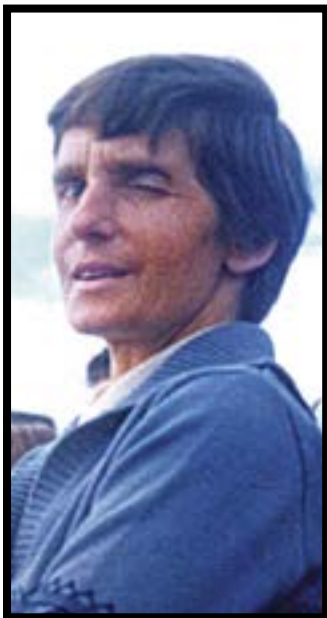
Prue Cutts, our new councilor, paid us a visit in December. She seemed keen on local history, and gave us some ideas on how to approach council when applying for funding.

The library has just appointed Lara McKinley as Community Stories Project Officer for the Whitehorse and Manningham Library Corporation. Lara's first project is set for International Women's Day (March 18) and is looking to showcase remarkable women in history from the area. She has chosen to focus on Mary Matheson (who, with her husband Captain Charles Matheson, owned the Strathdon orchard in Forest Hill) and our own Wilhemina Schwerkolt.



NP1606 Mary Matheson

Pat Richardson



VALE Molly Bettina Stevenson

January 4, 1928 – January 15, 2017

ONE thing people always used to say about mum was that she was a "lady". By that they meant that she was kind, always considered others, was gentle and genteel. I think it speaks volumes to say that I agreed with all these estimations; adding that she was a wonderful mother to me and my brother. She was always there to support us in any way she could – which leads me to mention a frustrating aspect of her character: she never felt she had done enough, and (I suspect) found it hard to accept what a successful life she has had.

She fought hard for all she achieved, both in work (as a school librarian, and later a freelance editor) and in pursuing her interests, which included Tai Chi and Renaissance dancing. She maintained a keen interest in the world about her, reading widely and rejoicing in the knowledge gained from the many and diverse manuscripts that benefitted from her editorial skills. Right up until a month before she died she was helping me by editing stories for this newsletter, and for the *Burwood Bulletin*.

We who know and love her will miss her greatly.

Chris Gray

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DECEMBER MEETING REPORT

Olympic memories

ON Saturday, 10 December 2016, Pat Richardson introduced Bob Gardiner to an eagerly awaiting audience by running through a brief summary of his achievements (*see box*).

Bob commenced his talk by covering some of his father Bert's achievements. Originally Bert entered the sport as an administrator, but was quickly persuaded to compete. His successes included the 1925 Australasian 7 Mile Championship, as a result of which the Gardiners created a medal for the 10,000 metre Victorian Championship. Later Bert went on to be a World statistician, an Australian selector, helped to start the Women's Walking Association, plus aided many local clubs in starting up – including the Collingwood Harriers (1926), which Bob joined in 1953.

Although Bert stopped competing in late 1930s due to knee injury, Bob raced his dad (for the one-and-only time) in 1953 at Bendigo. Bert got a big start on Bob and so retired unbeaten. However, in 1989 he came out of retirement for the World Masters Championships in Melbourne. At 85, he achieved a Silver Medal in the 5km Walk.

In 1956 Bert was on the organizing committee for the Olympic Games. Bob took part in the trials, coming 5th. Although not a competitor, he was to be an official at the Games, working on a "Feeding Station" for the marathon and 50km walks. A green line was painted along Dandenong Road to Oakleigh and back for the competitors to follow. The Feeding Station was, in Bob's words, a "bit of a shemozzle". This was before the days of Performance Sports drinks and the organisers decided in their wisdom that each station would be provided with an urn (powered by a kind neighbor), paper cups set up along the table, and the choice of tea or coffee, black or white and with or without sugar. The instruction was "Send somebody up the road and he can ask them what they want!" Bob remembers "You would ask a Russian would they like tea or coffee ... and they couldn't understand you; then they'd come and knock all the cups over anyway, because they didn't want anyone else to get them!"

Following the Games Bob married Barb, had a daughter, moved to Mitcham; all the time continuing to run – though yet without serious Olympic aspirations. However, gradually the race wins became more frequent and, with Barb's support, Bob decided to train with the Olympics in mind. At the time he worked in South Melbourne, and walking to from work served both as training, and to enable him to see his kids before they went to bed.

There was no money in those days – one wasn't allowed to accept sponsorship. "In '56, just prior to the games, a few of us who raced in the trials were interviewed on television," says Bob. "We were given a £10 fee for doing it, but I couldn't take it because I would have been banned. In those days the pros and the amateurs were deadly enemies! You were allowed a trophy (maximum value £25), but it had to be something useless – you couldn't have anything of practical value.

A MINI-BIOGRAPHY

BOB produced many world class times between 1960 and 1972. He was a big time performer and produced his best in the Australian Championships where he won a total of 16 medals including 8 golds. He held concurrently the Australian 2 miles, 20 km and 50 km titles, the only Australian to hold all titles at the one time. It was not until 1977 that this feat was equalled.

His first Australian title, in the 1961 National two miles championship (14:40.2) at Lang Park in Brisbane, marked the start of Bob's national and international career, which had many highlights including

- Selection for both the 20 km and 50 km walks in the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo. There, he retired injured in the 20 km but took 5th place in the 50 km walk in a new National record of 4:17:06.
- Selection in the 20 km racewalk in the 1967 U.S.A. versus British Commonwealth meeting
- A great second in the 20 mile walk in the 1970 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh
- Selection in the 20 km walk in the 1971 Russia/U.S.A. versus World All Stars meet.
- Selection in both the 20 km and 50 km walks in the 1972 Olympics in Munich. Unfortunately he had to withdraw from the team with a groin injury shortly before departure.

In his 55th year he showed he was still capable of world class times in his age division by setting world veteran 5,000m and 20 km records at the Australian Veteran Championships. He is still an active walker and is in his sixty-fourth year as a competitor. A constant supporter of the VRWC, Bob's services to the club were recognised with a life membership award in 1987 (he is also a life member of Collingwood Harriers).

“Having said that, I came through the best era. Prior to the '56 Games, anyone who went in a team overseas had to raise the bulk of their own money – and even had to buy their uniforms in some cases. But from '56 onwards the teams were fully funded – we even got a dollar a day to cover personal expenses.”

In 1964 Bob won the 50km walk trial, and made the team for the Tokyo Olympics. He recalls that it was a great time to visit Japan. As the country was on the cusp of becoming an international power, many “olde world” aspects of the city still remained to be seen.

After being selected for the team, letters confirming places were received, athletes were measured for and received their uniforms; but, as Bob says, “It didn't really sink in until I walked into Essendon Airport and was surrounded by all the others wearing their green blazers. Amidst all the excitement and chattering I realized ‘Oh – I really *am* in the team!’

The Australian Olympic team for Tokyo was quite large – around 300. The plane they flew on was chartered, “... and as soon as we got on board, everyone grabbed the blankets and changed into their track suits. It was a long flight, so we got ourselves comfortable. The swimmer girls – tiny little things – were lying in the luggage racks, and everyone else was lying on the floor along the aisle, so to go to the toilet you had to walk along the arms of the seats!”

Arriving in Japan was just as exciting. “After leaving the airport we jumped into buses and drove down a road to the [Olympic] Village, which was flanked with all the flags of the competing nations. All the people in their colourful track suits, and some in their national dress, really made you realise that this was a great international event.”

The Tokyo Olympic Village had originally been an American army base, so most of the dwellings were one- or two-storeys, set in pleasant bush surroundings. It was a large area, with plenty of room to train, and the Japanese organisers provided free bikes for competitors to get around on. Bob remembers it being a bit “hairy”, with huge athletes (who had probably not ridden since they were kids) “coming at you”, at times somewhat precariously.

Bob's billet was on the second floor of a building, in a two-room suite that he shared with three distance runners. They were in one room, while Bob had the second to himself. One story Bob tells is of how the hounding of the Press was driving Ron Clarke crazy. Trevor Vincent, one of Bob's room-mates, asked if Ron could have his room so he could get a little peace. “So I became Ron Clarke for a while – I slept in his bed and he slept in mine! They left my name on the door and when the reporters came looking for him, they said ‘Where's Ron Clarke's bed?’ And I'd shift my stuff and say ‘That's Ron Clarke's bed’”. Olympians had to stick together!

Another day, Bob was sitting outside in the garden when his roommates got back from a run. One of them, Tony Cook, kept on running up and down.

“What are you doing, Tony?” asked Bob.

“I said I was going to run for an hour,” responded Tony. “It's only been 55 minutes”.

That's what made an Olympian!

Bob's talk continued on to briefly cover his second Olympics, in Mexico, the 1970 Edinburgh Commonwealth Games and a very informative Question Time. It was over all too soon, and we retired to the Work Room for refreshments.



(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) Bert Gardiner wins the Australian 7-Mile Championship, Adelaide 1925; Bob, Ted Allsopp and Ron Crawford train in Tokyo, 1964; “It still fits!” – Bob shows his 1968 Olympic team blazer.



Chris Gray

From the

Blackburn & Mitcham Reporter

CIRCULATING IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF BLACKBURN AND MITCHAM AND DONCASTER.

Volume 48 Number 6

Friday, 8 February 1935

Price Twopence

EAST DONCASTER.

NOTEWORTHY EFFORTS OF CHILDREN.

The local school, which opened with 99 pupils on the roll last year, achieved admirable results under the co-operative plan which was first put into force in 1921. They have raised in all about £429 for the Children's Hospital, and their contribution to the Flood Relief Fund totalled £35. Former pupils who have now gone on to higher schools are Jack Petty and Olive Fromhold (Swinburne Technical), Marjorie Noonan, dux of the school in 1934 (Intern C.E.G.S.), John Amann (Coburg High School) and Patricia Gould (Box Hill Girls' Junior Technical). The averages attained by the school last year were highly satisfactory, and this one should prove even more so now that the new curriculum is working more smoothly.

THE ADVANTAGE OF AN EARLY START.

All head teachers may not agree on the point, but it is the considered opinion of a very keen member of the profession that parents should be encouraged to send their children to school at an earlier age than six. Many parents are fully of the belief that their children will not be admitted under that age, and others consider that until then the little ones are too young. The first is certainly the case with some schools for various reasons, but the second need be no deterrent. Children under six will be considered probably too young for systematic lessons, but there is no suggestion that they should undertake those. They simply get the "school habit," and their time is spent in play of a kind which is deeply interesting to them and in which their little brains are gradually developing. The benefit of this early beginning becomes apparent in the child's second year at school. Instead of a too frequently scared fledgling from the home nest, the teacher has a youngster to work on who is thoroughly familiar with the routine of school life, and who goes at once into the first grade. Succeeding years bring their removes into higher grades, and at the proper age the boy or girl is ready to move out into higher school work or to begin the business of life with a thoroughly good education.

Film Director: "In this part you have to do a number of funny falls. How are you on falls?"

Applicant (confidently): "I rank next to Niagara."

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Matinee Programme: "We're Not
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Ghost City," Comedies, etc.

MONDAY, TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY
FEBRUARY 11, 12, 13.

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in
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BLACKBURN.

STATE SCHOOL MOTHERS' CLUB.

At its meeting last Tuesday, the Mothers' Club installed the following office-bearers:—President, Mrs. Allan (re-elected); vice-presidents, Mesdames Parker and Paine; treasurer, Mrs. Haywood (re-elected); secretary, Mrs. McDougall (re-elected); committee, Mesdames Carter, Lewis, Evans, Griffiths, Whittebury, Lee, McDonald, Beinke, Byrne. The opinion was strongly expressed that swimming should form part of the training, and enquiries are to be made regarding the provision of facilities to make this possible.

FOREST HILL.

The Forest Hill school picnic held last Thursday at Edithvale was again a great success, despite unpleasant weather conditions. About 200 scholars and parents attended. Six well-loaded trucks left the school at 9 o'clock. The new school master and his wife were present, and were officially welcomed by Mr. Johnson (correspondent of the School Committee). The success of the picnic was due to the truck owners who kindly loaned their trucks each year, for which the Mothers' Club is grateful.

Saturday, 9th February

At 4 p.m. On the Property.

Lake Road, Blackburn

(Corner Halley Street)

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out. The property is in excellent or-
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4½ per cent. interest. For further
particulars and inspection see the
Auctioneer,

FRANK FISHER & CO., 54 Rail-
way road, Blackburn. WX2453.

"What line do you take when the
boys try to kiss you?"

"The line of least resistance."

LONG DISTANCE DINNER

IF there be any truth in the old belief that intervals between the courses at dinner are good for your digestion, then dyspepsia should not quickly overtake members of the Blackburn and Mitcham Younger Set if they frequently practice what they did on the evening of Tuesday 5th inst. In response to an invitation to join in what was called a progressive dinner, about forty-five ladies and gentlemen congregated at the home of Mrs. McNaught, in Gordon Crescent, Blackburn. Piping hot soup was drunk, then off went the party to the next leg of their diners' progress. They brought up, in due course, at the home of the Shire President and Mrs. W.R.Tainton at East Burwood, where the piece de resistance, in the shape of roast beef and vegetables, was attacked with vigour and completely vanquished. Observing the rules of a balanced diet, now that the good, solid ballast had been stored away below, fruit salad and cream attracted the revellers to their next stop, the home of Mrs. Forbes in Mitcham. The next hop was out to Vermont where Mrs.T.Brockell had brewed the coffee and set out the biscuits. History does not relate the state of the appetites when supper was partaken of at Mrs. A.E.White's home in Mitcham Road, Mitcham, after a short social evening – short because the journeyings had occupied a considerable amount of time. Keen interest was taken in the frog race, and the most expert manipulators turned out to be Miss Ruth Gleadow and the president of the set, Mr. Basil Warner. A short bout of community singing put a good edge on the desire for supper. Mr. Warner thanked the hostess for making her home available. He also expressed gratitude to Mr. D/Kinder for donating the meat, and to Mr.L.J.Barelli for the use of an oven to cook the "outsize" joint.

Blackburn and Mitcham Reporter July 23, 1938

Whitehorse Historical Society 2017 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 11 March

Saturday 6 May

Saturday 9 September

Saturday 11 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 Schwerkolt Cottage and
Museum Complex.

**Saturday, 11 February 2017
1.00pm General Meeting**

Ned Kelly (1906)

2017 Speakers T.B.A.

Statistics

Photographs catalogued	-	4233
Artefacts catalogued	-	4783
Documents catalogued	-	7210
Museum visitors November–December	-	281
 Facebook 'likes' to December	-	662

GROWING FRUIT IN WWII *continued from page 1*

To keep their orchards productive the farmers, through the League, had to cajole the various ministers, both local and federal, to obtain sufficient fertilisers and suitable sprays to combat infestations of all manner of pests that had included a serious outbreak of aphids. The replies were not encouraging, as these materials were allocated by the Controller of Manures to areas he thought appropriate and in quantities available at the time.

By 1944 the farm implements were wearing out. New secateurs became an early priority. Many requests were made – one reached the desk of the Minister for Munitions, Norman Makin – and other promises of imported pieces from England were delayed. After many months support was received from a local firm, Pope Products Ltd, who supplied a design that was specifically made for the growers.

Farmers in the eastern suburbs requested a more accessible place to have their tractors serviced. The distance to Coburg, the nearest service station, was inconvenient with the limited petrol available. The League enquired and received a prompt and encouraging response from a private firm in Geelong, International Harvester, who agreed to open an outlet on Whitehorse Road, Blackburn.

To enable their crops to be harvested, consent had to be obtained from the government for the release of man-power. Without this help, some farmers resorted to hosing off the blossoms in an attempt to stop fruit forming and to keep their trees alive.

During this difficult period of the war years, accompanied by severe droughts between 1940 and 1945, when the most of Victoria was carting water and the catchments were almost empty, the League requested the use of reticulated water for the eastern districts. Even so, a large number of orchards became neglected and unproductive and were given up completely. Consequently, when hostilities ended and mass immigration commenced, these farms were sold off for housing.

A Y Fitzmaurice, August 2016

Sources

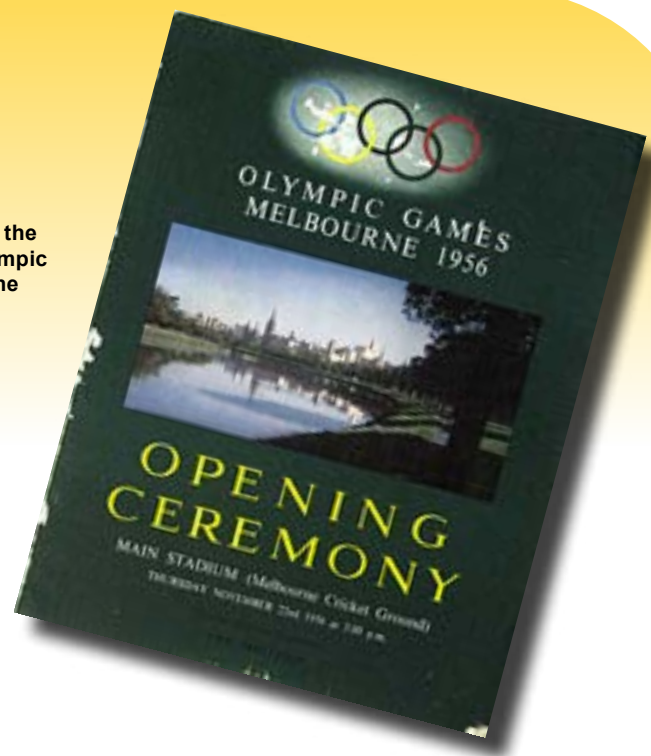
WHS documents ND2794 & ND2814
TROVE – newspapers.

FROM THE COLLECTION

NA3297

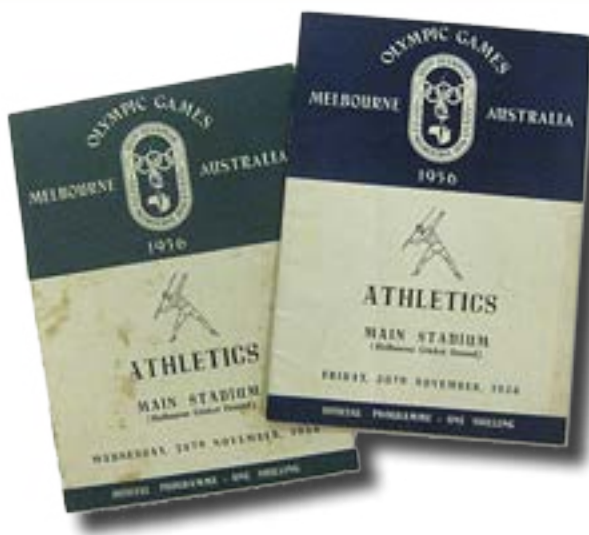
Official Souvenir Programme for the Opening Ceremony of the 1956 Olympic Games. Its 31 pages included a history of the Olympic movement, a description of the journey of the Olympic Flame from Olympia to Melbourne and information about the running of the XVth Olympiad.

Printer: Wilke + Co Ltd, 19-47 Jeffcott St Melbourne.



NA1825.1-2

Two programmes (Wednesday 28th and Friday 30th of November) for the athletics at the 1956 Melbourne Olympics .
Printer: Wilke + Co Ltd 19-47 Jeffcott St Melbourne.



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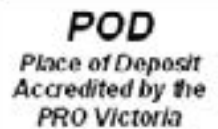
Copy Deadline for next WHS Newsletter: Wednesday, 8 March 2017

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."



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.

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