

## FINDING YOURSELF an historical journey

“BETTER for her not to know,” they told my parents in 1946. I was adopted into a lovely and loving family and indeed have lived a most fortunate and privileged life. A husband, a first home and two wonderful daughters followed in the predictable and accepted order for the time, and, until my husband had a car broken into in Grenoble while on business and all his documents stolen, my life was ordered and uneventful.

A 2am phone call, “cancel all the credit cards, everything’s been stolen, I’m waiting for the office to open tomorrow morning then I’ll drive to the Australian Embassy in Paris ... you’ll need to help me from the Melbourne end ...”

I had to get copies of his birth certificate urgently to fax (we are talking the early 1980s here) to Paris. Eventually seeing the copy of his full birth certificate, I somehow knew – it was so different to what I had always known as my birth certificate.

Here began my real life’s journey. Confronting my beloved Mum and Dad with “...why wasn’t I told, why was I lied to?” Tears, stories and resolution of lots of stories and acceptance of what was the wisdom of the time; but fortunately for me changes were being made to adoption information laws, so that by 1984 there was open access to personal histories for adoptees.

With the empathetic help of a mature social worker from the Mission of St James and St John, I was able to trace my birth mother back to her town in country NSW prior to her being sent to Melbourne for my birth. I missed meeting my birth mother by 14 years, but with the help of both the Anglican Church and the local country Historical Society I was indeed lucky to meet half-brothers and a half-sister, and a couple of her school friends. Again, thanks to that local Historical Society, I have many photographs of my birth Mother and a real understanding of life in that tiny town at the end of WWII. Indeed, if you use your maths, I was likely conceived around VE Day! I strongly believe it’s far better to

know the truth of ones’ origins than not – my adoptive parents were, are and will always be my

“parents”. There is just a little bit of back story that’s important, interesting and good to know.

Fast forward some years. Husband Bruce and I have put in the hard yards of raising a family. He was in the computer industry for many years, working with huge mainframes and desktop machines, true sights to behold compared with the computing power we now have in our pockets. Me, well, I was a full-time mum for the younger part of the children’s lives, having had to resign as a Secondary Art and Craft Teacher when I was pregnant with my first child.

After about 11 years out of the workforce I found my teaching qualifications needed upgrading and so went ‘repping’ for two educational publishing companies. Great fun, and I eventually became a Commissioning Editor and finished after 13 years as Reprint Controller for an international reading programme. A project conceived in New Zealand, published in Melbourne, brokered in Hong Kong, printed in China and sold around the world in sometimes up to eight language editions, we were kept well and truly on our toes getting those 240 16-page books into classrooms for beginning readers.

With both daughters at University of Melbourne and establishing their own lives, I was getting ready to retire and have some bigger travel experiences. Bruce and I have always loved cycling, so one winter got the idea of flying into Cairns and cycling to Cooktown ... only slightly crazy, but great fun. While I was still working we did the “fly in, ride around” idea a few more times, notably Yulara to Kings Canyon, and, when I retired, Melbourne to Cairns over two winters.

*(continued on page 4)*



**NEXT MEETING**

**General Meeting 1pm Saturday 8 December 2018**

*Graham Patterson*

*History highlights on the Port Phillip coast*



# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

**PICTURES:** (Below left) Our stall at the Whitehorse Spring Festival; (Below right) Vicki, returned serviceman Rahman Abdur, Rahman's daughter Emma (one of 20 students selected for the Premier's "Spirit of ANZAC Award" tour) and Cr Raylene Carr.

*Dear Members*

**T**HE Committee and volunteers have had a very busy year culminating in our first Remembrance Day ceremony.

The Ceremony, in perfect weather, with a display of hand knitted poppies, was held to honour the men and woman of Mitcham who had served in WWI and marked the 100th Anniversary of the Armistice of 1918. The poppies were knitted by Margaret Graham and Barbara McPhee, the trumpeter was Mads Sørensen and the readings were by Corporal Rahman Abdur and his daughter Emma Rahman. Councillor Raylene Carr laid the wreath from Whitehorse Council beneath the flag. Our thanks to all these people, attendees and Society members who made the occasion very special.



Our display in the Visitor Centre and Museum was open after the service and many people took the time to view and to have refreshments and Anzac biscuits in the Local History Room. A walking group started their walk an hour and half later than planned after noticing the poppies. Our volunteers produced a stunning display and we thank Mitcham Rotary and their Department of Veterans' Affairs Grant for assisting us in creating this reminder of the "war to end all wars". Thanks are due to our Vice President, Peter McPhee for enabling this liaison and for the collection from the now closed Mitcham RSL to be in our care.

Some people who attended The Halliday Park, Mitcham remembrance service – including Councillors Ben Stennett and Prue Cutts – came for refreshments and to view the display. Michael Sukkar MP and others continued arriving throughout the day to view the poppies and the display. We estimate that over 60 people attended the service and over 100 attended on the day.

In October we participated in the Whitehorse Spring Festival where the pictures of old land estate plans by our photographer, Richard Conn, generated interest.

Kathy and I attended a Mitcham Rotary meeting to present a Certificate of Appreciation for their contribution of the Sausage Sizzle to our Heritage Family Day,

We welcome a new Wednesday volunteer, member Brian Millane. We have a busy and happy group of 17–20 volunteers each Wednesday.

On a more prosaic note a water leak was discovered at the entrance to the Local History Room and although that has been fixed we now have another leak further along the pipe. Council's Facilities Maintenance department have had to get specialist contractors to find and fix the fault. The water luckily ran outside the building.

As it is the end of the year I wish you a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and happy holidays. Our Wednesday working group will finish on Wednesday 12 December and will reopen on Wednesday 17 January 2019.

*Vicki Jones Evans*



**\*See more pictures from Remembrance Day on page 7**

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## the mystery of Fairyland



**T**HE meeting on October 13 didn't start well: the microphone fell out of its jerry-built clasp and promptly stopped working. Fortunately our speaker, James Nicolas, had a clear and resonant voice that was able to project sufficiently for all to hear him. The day hadn't started well for him either. He had hit his head in the morning; but, as he said, he had been taught that "the show must go on"!

The show, in this case, was the intriguing story of Fairyland Cottage in Kew, which for twenty years from the mid-1940s was an open house to children: presided over by Grace Tabulo with the support of her husband Jim. Grace had a passion for children and childhood and her home was a fervent expression of this, with a garden full of gnomes and bric-a-brac, and all manner of items to keep children amused. Grace was an amazing storyteller, with the ability to captivate childish imagination – bringing to life the tales she told.

Fairyland was a place of freedom: open to children all hours of the day. If they rang the bell, said James, it was because they like the sound it made, not because it was required of them. When James asked for people to share recollections with him, the overwhelming response was that visits there were some of their happiest childhood memories. They remembered the sense of belonging: there were no "Do Not Touch" signs on anything in the house. They remembered the special days that Grace would organise, to celebrate things such as the birth of the royal children.

But why is James's book called the "Mystery" of Fairyland? The answer is in a personal connection he has with the cottage; to say more would be a "spoiler" for those who may hear him speak in future, so I will not do so here. Of course, you can buy the book – but to hear him speak would be well worthwhile before doing so.

Although Jim died in 1950, Grace continued to welcome children to Fairyland right up until her death in 1965. The legacy of Fairyland to the community is well-served by James's book, and is the sort of story that should not be forgotten in the increasingly splintered society in which we live.

*Chris Gray*



**PICTURES (clockwise from top):** James tells his story; Grace Tabulo in her garden; A visit from Ivanhoe Girls School



# FINDING YOURSELF

## an historical journey *(continued from page 1)*

Wonderful trips, giving me a deep love and appreciation of this country and especially its country people.

Daughter Susan and her husband were both working in England, so Bruce and I got the idea of seeing them, then taking the bikes over on the ferry to France for a touch of European cycle touring. We had originally planned to go to Scotland, but the foot and mouth outbreak in the UK in 2001 made France a much better option.

Hence the start of our first “deux mille kilometre un velo” trip. The first of four, the most recent in 2013. In particular, the 2013 trip has had a lasting and profound influence on me. We flew the bikes into Amsterdam, then flew home from Geneva. Initial plan was to enjoy the Burgundy and Champagne regions of France, and their many offerings of both food and wine. We were unprepared for the experience of riding bicycles through what was, the entire Western Front of WWI.

Cycle touring, the way we do it, with minimal pre-bookings, is a wonderful, though sometimes unpredictable, experience. You never quite know where you will be resting your head that night, and we have had many experiences. However the Western Front at bicycle pace has changed me forever. The sheer enormity of those beautifully tended cemeteries and graves dedicated to so many young men and women of all ages, nationalities, and faiths. What a profound waste.

Unsure if it's been because we are also bereaved parents (our younger daughter Sally died aged 32 in 2008) or seeing the resting place of so many young Australians so far from home. For every one of those graves in Belgium and France there were mothers and family who were forever altered by what happened to their loved ones between 1914 and 1918. We must never forget.

I have a couple of family connections with WWI: first Gallipoli, to which I had paid little attention prior to the ride down the Western Front. My great uncle, a Private in the 9th Light Horse, is commemorated at the Lone Pine Memorial. I have the original newspaper article from his home town in Victoria's Western District advising the community of his death. As with many families, this cutting was put in a little leather case, and not talked about ... better to move on. Secondly, my grandfather, a groom on wealthy English and Irish estates in peacetime, become an acquirer and breaker of horses for the Western Front. A 'War Horse' man just like in the movie. I've since spent much time researching both their stories.

Seeing the Western Front, I immediately understood all those memorials in our country towns. I always make a point of stopping and looking at the names, sometimes of three or four family members. Lest We Forget.

The Western Front, while confronting and evocative, was welcoming and wonderful. Random overnight accommodation in a house built in 1906 near Amiens, with a delightful 80-year-old hostess telling wonderful stories of her mother giving concerts for the Australian troops, and her collection of framed allied forces badges on the landing upstairs.

Back to today and my love of history, especially “people stories”. I do believe, as Carl Sagan said, “You have to know the past to understand the present ...” In today's fast and furious world, we all need to take a little time to reflect, recall and respect what has gone before, especially at an “ordinary” level. These stories are the stories of us all.

Margaret Graham



*Arthur John Went  
Winifred Went's father -  
worked as 'stable master' on  
estates in England and Ireland*



*Douglas Brennan,  
Winifred Brennan  
Margaret Brennan*



*Margaret's birth mother*

# From the Nunawading Reporter

CIRCULATING IN THE CITY OF NUNAWADING AND THE SHIRE OF DONCASTER AND TEMPLESTOWE AND SURROUNDING DISTRICTS

Volume 66 Number 47

Friday, 4 December 1953

Price Threepence

## BLACKBURN MAN HELD-UP

### PAYROLL TAKEN AT SHOE FACTORY

Mr. A. O. Spicer of The Avenue, Blackburn, was menaced by four masked men who raided the Spicer Shoe Company's North Fitzroy factory on Thursday afternoon last week. The men escaped with a £1000 payroll and a cash box containing £60.

The four men wore coloured handkerchiefs across their faces, and carried long barrelled pistols. They entered the premises by the front door at 2.45 p.m. just after the receptionist had left her desk. They went through an inner door into the cash office where they threatened Mr. Spicer, who is a director of the company.

### Tried to Gain Time

Mr. Spicer tried to stall for time but one of the gunmen told him they meant business and hit him over the head. Thereupon Mr. Spicer waved towards the desk under which the money was stacked, and the men took it and backed out.

The money stolen had been taken out of the bank only an hour before, and the thieves timed their raid so that there was nobody in the reception office when they entered.

### Left in Stolen Car

Leaving the factory the men entered a blue Holden, later found to have been stolen earlier that day, and drove towards the city.

Patrol police arrived three minutes after the robbery and followed in the direction taken by the thieves' car, but found no trace of it. Police think the men may have been the same as those who carried out a number of armed hold-ups in the Melbourne suburbs in the past three months.

Later that night police found the stolen car in which the bandits made their getaway. It was found at the corner of Lygon and Lee streets, North Carlton, less than a mile from the scene of the hold-up.

## FILM UNIT AT BLACKBURN



MEMBERS OF A FILM PRODUCTION PARTY from Melbourne University "shooting" a scene at the Blackburn Lake. In the neighbourhood a film to take an hour to show is being made. On shore in this view are cameraman John Anderson, and Lindsay Tassie, and (on right) director Gil Bresley. Out on the raft, in one of the principal roles of the story, is John Storey, a law student. —Age Photo

## EAST BURWOOD

### MITCHAM WOMAN KILLED

Late on Tuesday night Mrs. Myra Alice Kemp, of Vernal avenue, Mitcham, came into collision at the corner of Springvale and Burwood roads, East Burwood. Mrs. Kemp's husband, Henry Kemp, who was driving one of the cars, was taken by ambulance to Alfred Hospital where he was treated for severe shock. The driver of the other car, Joseph Smith, of Springvale road, Springvale, was admitted to Alfred Hospital with broken ribs. This is the first serious accident at this intersection since the Nunawading City Council cut back the banks and widened Burwood road at this spot.

## HOMES GET SEWERAGE

### NUNAWADING EXTENSIONS

Extensions to the sewerage system in six suburbs in Melbourne including Nunawading 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 Nunawading 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, Ronley street, and Eustace street.

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# Married 60 years!

**W**E congratulate Barb and Bob Gardiner who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on November 1.

They purchased land at 7 May Court, a new development on the former acreage of August Schwerkolt and built their home there in 1962 where they raised their family.

Throughout the years they have been instrumental in preserving Schwerkolt Cottage and the surrounding bushland and have both been actively involved in our Historical Society, serving on the committee and holding office in various capacities.

Bob has also distinguished himself as an Olympic walker.

We are most appreciative of all the time and effort they have given to our society and the preservation of the Cottage and wish them both well for the future.

*Rosalie Whalen*



Bob and Barb's 60th at Bucatini's Restaurant in Whitehorse Rd Mitcham.

## DIARY DATES

Meetings are held at the Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex.

**Saturday, 8 December**

**1.00pm General Meeting**

*Graham Patterson: History highlights on the Port Phillip coast*

**Saturday, 9 February**

**1.00pm General Meeting**

*Rosalie Whalen & Bob Gardiner: Fires, [1905] 1939, 1962*

## 2019 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 2 March**

**Saturday 4 May**

**Saturday 6 July**

**Saturday 7 September**

**Saturday 9 November**

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

## OUR COMMITTEE

Vicki Jones-Evans – President  
Peter McPhee – Vice President  
Kathy Innes – Secretary  
Eddie Tan – Treasurer

### Committee Members

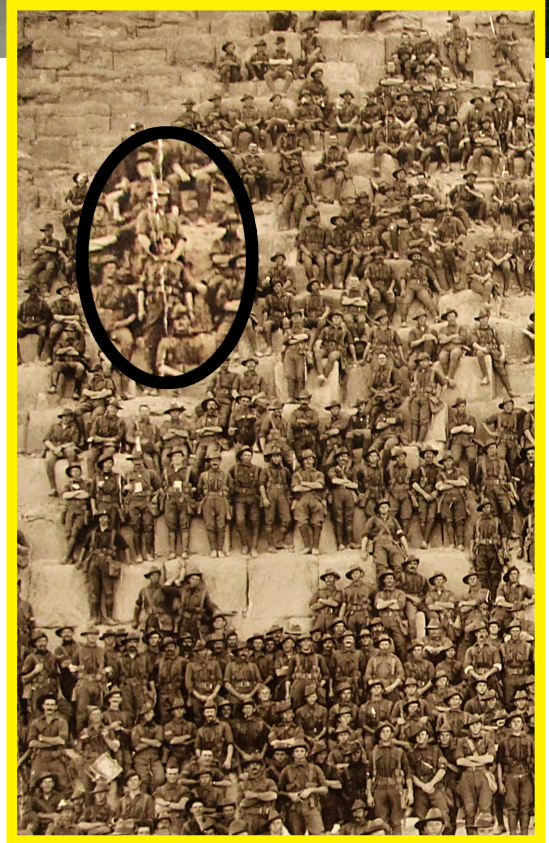
Yvonne Fitzmaurice	Rob Innes
Margaret Graham	Pat Richardson
Harley Hall	Chris Gray
Judith Hall	

## STATISTICS

Photographs catalogued	-	4273
Artefacts catalogued	-	4844
Documents catalogued	-	7481
Museum visitors September–October		1212

 Facebook 'likes' to October	-	738
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---	-----

# 1918-2018: Remembering the Armistice



PICTURES (clockwise from top): Part of the museum display; detail from the famous photo on display in the museum of the 11th Battalion in Egypt (circled section highlights one of their recently killed comrades being supported so he could be a part of the photo); an appreciative audience at the ceremony; Vicki addresses the gathering; Rahman Abdur speaks; Mads Sørensen plays the Last Post.



## WHS Committee Contacts

### President

Vicki Jones-Evans  
9873 3383

### Vice-President

Peter McPhee

### Secretary

Kathy Innes

### Treasurer

Eddie Tan

Local History Room (03) 9873 4946

## Newsletter Team

Chris Gray  
Wendy Standfield

## WHS website

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

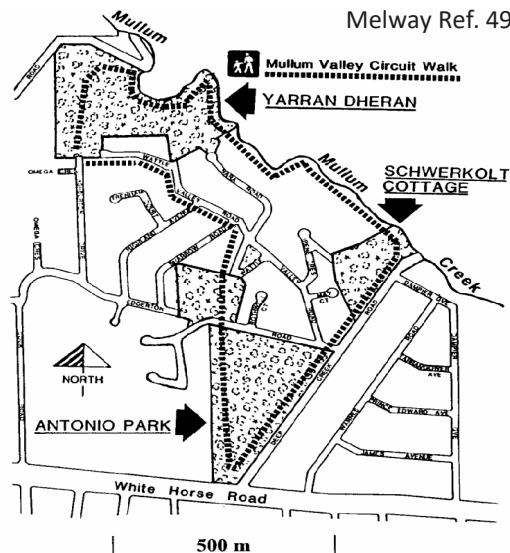
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**Copy Deadline for next WHS Newsletter: Wednesday, 9 January 2019**

## 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."*



CITY OF



**WHITEHORSE**

## REMEMBER

### Whitehorse Historical Society

#### Local History Collection

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 City of Whitehorse.*



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