

## SARAH BERNHARDT *in Box Hill*

Although but a fleeting stay locally, the *Box Hill Reporter* made the most of a legendary actress's visit in 1891.



Photo taken during Australian visit 1891 (State Library of Victoria)

This talented lady who is creating such a *furor* in the city at the present time, and whose fame is world-wide, paid a visit to Box Hill on Monday afternoon last. She was accompanied by one or two members belonging to her company. The party put up at Gromann's Railway Hotel, where they had some refreshments and remained for an hour. During the time that Madame Bernhardt remained in the hotel she entered freely into conversation with Mr. Gromann and asked him a number of questions having reference to the growth of the district. She expressed herself as being well pleased with the splendid view to be had from the hotel, and thought that the residents had every right to feel proud of their picturesque town. All the surrounding to her mind indicated an entire absence of poverty, and plainly testified that the inhabitants of Box Hill lived in a land of full and plenty, and were the fortunate recipients of all those comforts which only money can purchase and good and sound health enjoy. Madam Bernhardt made herself perfectly at home and walked about the hotel as though it had been her abode for years. She opened the piano and played a couple of French airs with as much *sangfroid* as if she were in her native land, and then took her departure in a handsome drag with the rest of her friends.

Doubtless when Madam Bernhardt returns to France she will remember the pleasant hour she spent in Box Hill, where she was free from the gaze of the motley group who are always staring at her when she is driving or shopping in the city.

*The Box Hill Reporter*  
19 June 1891



# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

*Dear Members*

Happy New Year!

The Wednesday Workers started back on 13 January with masks on and lots of enthusiasm to get started in 2021.

Rob has been busy over the holiday break and has sent our database to Victorian Collections to begin the process of having our Collection on line. This will take a couple of months and in the meantime we will be organising the new working procedures.

At the Committee Meeting in December it was decided that we would aim to resume General Meetings in April as long as we are able to provide a Covid-safe meeting. Our planned date is on Saturday 10 April at the usual time of 1pm. We will advise details closer to the date.

With an exciting plan to revamp the Museum the Committee voted to expand on the purchase of two new showcases that are courtesy of our Local History Grant for the Museum. Four additional showcases will

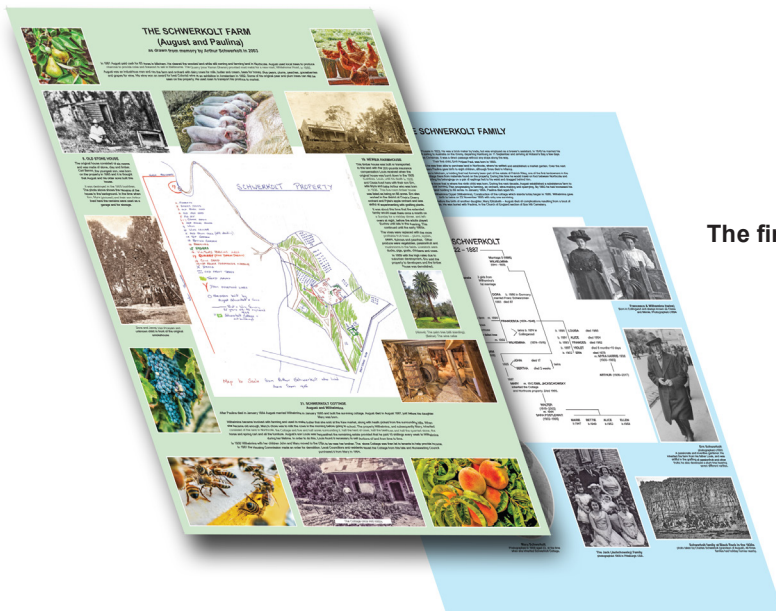
be purchased using our Term Deposit savings. The new cases will be easier to access for changing displays and will provide more shelving at viewer height for visitors. The Museum will then have more uniformity of case styles than now.

The new Visitor Centre display posters featuring the history of the area are continuing to be developed. The finished posters so far are the Schwerkolt Farm and the Schwerkolt Family. The Pre-European story has been prepared and we are seeking assistance from the local Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Corporation to complete this. The Clay Industry and Railway stories are underway as is the Industrial & Suburban Story.

Our Annual Planning Day will be on February 22 but with Covid-safe restrictions in place we will be unable to have any external attendees.

I am hoping that we will be able to meet this year as safely as possible.

*Vicki Jones Evans*



The first two finished posters for the Visitor Centre display.

## CONTENTS

President's Report	2	VALE Barbara Keene	4
Kitty Windsor and the Railway Gates	3	From <i>The Reporter</i> , 1901	5
Anyone for a Darwin Award?	4	Is This Where You Live? – Hopetoun Street, Mitcham	6
		Diary Dates	6
		Where was I when ...	7

**I**N 1923 Ernest (Ernie) Windsor arrive in Melbourne looking for work, He found work as a farm laborer at Rockbank. Several months later Catherine Windsor arrived in Melbourne with her two children Catherine (Kitty), born 1919, and Dominic (Dom), born 1922. Catherine also worked and lived at the farm cooking and cleaning. They both worked very long hours, which was very hard with two young children.

Eventually Ernie, looking for better-paid work, found a job working on track maintenance with the Victorian Railways at Yarroweyah, near Cobram. Yarroweyah consisted of their railway house, an unmanned small station, a one-roomed school and a shop; all else was farmland. They stayed there for ten years during which time two boys were born, John Ernest (Ernie) and Augustin (Gus/Megs).

There was no work for women in the area and as Kitty was fourteen, and with Ernie able to transfer to the North Melbourne railway yard, they decided to move to Footscray. The first night that the children spent in Footscray was amazing to them as they had never seen the big lights of the city.

Kitty found a job at Kinnear's Rope Works. This was a difficult time for her as a lot of machinery was unguarded and saw many of the girls get their hands caught in the mechanism. Sexual harassment was also rampant. She was very scared when she saw girls being taken into a small store room on regular intervals by a foreman.

A position, which included a railway house, became available for the family at Tunstall (Nunawading). Kitty and her mother were employed as gate keepers and Ernie on track maintenance between Ringwood and Box Hill. The gates where constructed from solid hardwood with steel brasses and weighed one ton each, which made them very heavy to push. There were four in total.

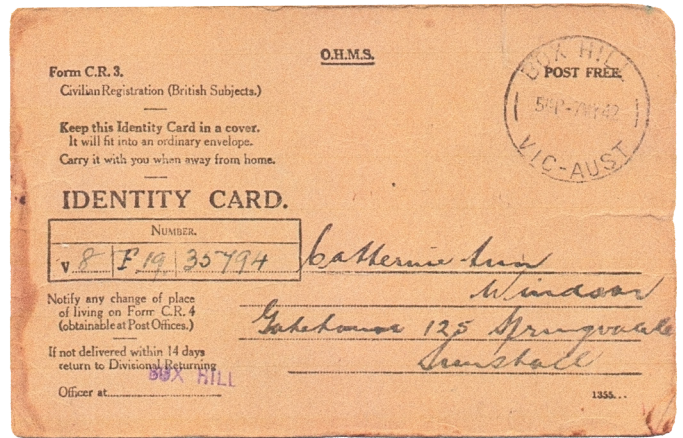
The gate keeper position required two twelve-hour shifts. Kitty often worked fourteen hours and at times she would work sixteen shifts to ease the burden on her mother – especially when her young sister Patricia was born. Ernie, after finishing his shift on the track, would also do several hours working the gates.

Part of the second shift was between midnight and 6am. During this period the gates were locked in position to allow maintenance trains generally spreading ballast to come through. If a car at night needed the gates opened the driver would knock at the gate house and the willing person would go out in the freezing cold, open and then lock the gates again.

There was a little hut by the gates with a small fire place. There Kitty could take shelter from the cold or the hot sun; but most of the shift would be spent standing outside. While watching for trains she would crochet beautiful dresses on order for local women.

During the war years she turned her crocheting skills into producing camouflage nets for the war effort. The family also entertained soldiers from the army camp situated beside the railway line, with Catherine playing her pianola for a singalong.

*(continued on page 7)*



# Kitty Windsor and the Railway Gates



**PICTURES:** (Top) Kitty's Identity Card dated 1942; (Above) Kitty at Tunstall Railway Gatehouse c1940s



## VALE Barbara Keene

**B**ARBARA Keene was a long-time member of the Whitehorse Historical Society, joining c1992 after retiring from teaching at Donvale High School. Barbara Rogalski, her neighbour and friend of many years, introduced her to the Wednesday working group and so began her many years with us. We had joined Museum Victoria in an Accreditation program for Local History Museums and a working group was established of which Barbara was a member. We achieved accreditation and so the work of cataloguing the artefacts began. Barbara spent many hours other than Wednesday cataloguing and also as a member of working parties. Barbara was also a President and Committee Member of the Society and generally contributed greatly to the Whitehorse Historical Society.

*Valda Arrowsmith*

Our story on Winlaton last issue prompted a memory from Peter McPhee of a true story with a Winlaton connection: slight, it is must be said; but a tale worth telling, nonetheless. Names and shoe sizes have been withheld to protect the guilty.

# Anyone for a Darwin Award?



**T**WO gents, with burns, were arrested at St Vincent's Hospital. When questioned by police they admitted setting fire to a nearby shop.

Each decided they would spread the accelerant on one floor of the building. The fellow on the first floor was surprised to find his mate behind him saying "I've lit the ground floor". As flames licked the room they were in, they decided to exit the building by jumping out the first floor window. One, scared of jumping, was persuaded to climb onto the back of the other. They jumped, and of course the one doing the carrying broke both ankles. Hailing a taxi, they asked to be taken to St Vincent's to get help for their burns. Telling the taxi driver of the cause of the injuries.

As it was an insurance scam, the police wanted to capture the Mr Big who had instigated the scam. One of the two turned state evidence. He was wired with recording equipment to catch Mr Big. Unfortunately, local police did a walkthrough of the meeting place, a hotel in Fitzroy.

"What are you doing here?" they enquired.

Tearing his shirt open, exposing the recorder, the man exclaimed, "I'm with you blokes!"

The police tried again. This time the man met Mr Big, but sat against the wall with toilets on the other side. All the recording revealed was how often the toilets were flushed.

Third time lucky. Another meeting place was selected, our informant was wired up at Russell Street and told do not touch

the equipment as it had already been activated. On his way to the meeting he commented on the physical attributes and his desire for each of the ladies he passed. All recorded. The recording had to be played untouched and in full at the subsequent hearing.

Sufficient evidence obtained, it was time for the case to be heard. No appearance from the star witness. Then the lead detective got a phone call. Our witness had broken into Winlaton to visit his girlfriend and could not break out.

I believe he was not the first witness delivered to court by divvy van.

This reinforced a fact I learned on my regular Wednesday night Pentridge visits. Not all criminals are super intelligent.

*Peter McPhee*

From the

# Blackburn & Mitcham Reporter

CIRCULATING IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF BLACKBURN AND MITCHAM AND DONCASTER.

Vol. 50. No. 1.

Registered at the General Post Office, Melbourne, for Transmission by Post as a Newspaper.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29, 1937.

PRICE: TWOPENCE

## EUNICE GRAY "THE FLORAL ARTIST"

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SEEDLINGS — PLANTS — SEEDS — CUT FLOWERS.  
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## MITCHAM.

### SWIMMING FACILITIES.

On Monday night, the engineer (Mr. N. G. Roeszler) reported to the shire council that the dam on the new reserve in Mitcham road was totally unfit for development as a swimming pool, giving the reasons for this conclusion. Cr. Eggington then moved that the engineer report on the suitability of Brunswick street reserve for the construction of a swimming pool. Cr. Claringbould scolded the motion, which was carried. This action will rouse the hopes of residents that Mitcham may soon be on an even footing with Doncaster and East Doncaster, which both have constructed pools for the children, since they felt they could not afford public swimming baths.

### RETURNED SOLDIERS.

Mr. Frank Fisher presided over a meeting of the local sub-branch R.S.I.L.A. in the Memorial Hall on Tuesday night. Preliminary arrangements for Anzac Day were discussed, including the day on which the local service would be held. It was finally decided that it should take place on the Sunday (18th April) before Anzac Day. Tentative proposals as to the speaker and other details were made and these will be announced when arranged. The president reported that he had in hand the matter of the proposal by the sub-branch to take over the Memorial Hall from the present trustees, and felt confident that he would be able to make a definite statement at the annual meeting next month. A complete survey of the names of all known ex-service men in the district was made, and an invitation to be present at the annual meeting is to be issued to each. The committee will be glad to have the names of any not included. Intimation was made of the broadcast over 3LO to be given by Sir Gilbert Dyett, the Federal President of the League, on Monday, 1st February, at 9 p.m.

### Clear Proof.

She: "I think that men always ought to wear something to show that they're married."

He: "Well, my suit shows that I'm married."

## SOMERS CAMP

Mr. R. G. Menzies, Attorney-General, speaking to the boys assembled, and in the presence of Lord Somers and Mr. Thomas, Member of the British House of Commons, now visiting Australia, said:—

"I tell you quite gravely that if we go on for thirty years more in Australia as we have been in the last thirty years, I do not see how Parliamentary Government can continue. If you took out a list of the members of Parliament of thirty years ago and compared it with a list to-day, your first comment would be 'What has happened to them to-day?' People have become lazy in mind. The business of governing is more important than lawyering, doctoring, bricklaying, and so on. What this country needs more than rainfall, up-to-date cars, and aeroplanes, is a larger supply of disinterested public service."

Mr. Menzies said that Australians were inclined to scoff at the public service and to think of Parliament as a talking shop. In England Parliament was respected because its importance was appreciated. He quoted the recently appointed Minister for Agriculture (Mr. W. S. Morrison) as an example of disinterested public service. "He gave up a career at the Bar which in a few years would have earned him £15,000 a year to become a junior Assistant Minister on a few pounds a week," said Mr. Menzies.

Discussing Empire affairs, Mr. Menzies said:—"We often say to ourselves that we are the best people in the world, without knowing who the other people in the world are. A great many of us believe that we can build up a little heaven of our own here. Until a few years ago people did not give five minutes' thought a year to the rest of the world. Heaven was bounded by the Gulf of Carpentaria on the north and Bass Strait on the south.

"Yet you would be horrified at the extent to which people in Europe are thinking in terms of hostility," Mr. Menzies added. "We can think of the prospects of the fourth Test or the third race. Our problems are child's

play compared with European problems, but if trouble were to begin we would be concerned. The existence and power of Great Britain are essential to us. To-day it is the one vast organisation in the world, with the exception of the United States, which contains no great threat to peace."

### FISH AND BIRD SOCIETY.

The monthly meeting of the Hawthorn and District Fish and Bird Society was held in the Recreation Hall, Auburn road, Auburn, on Monday, 11th January. After the nomination of officers for the coming year was called for a talk on the Gouldian Finch was given by Mr. Chegwidden, who dealt with the housing, feeding, breeding and rearing of the young. He advised that the birds must be kept warm when coming through the moult. Two types of nest boxes used by Mr. Chegwidden were on display. A hearty vote of thanks was passed to Mr. Chegwidden for his talk on the Gouldian. Awards for the evening were:—Budgerigars: old birds, Mr. Fanning; young birds, Mr. Payden. Cage birds: Mr. Payden. Fish: Mr. Brisbane.

## Proper Equipment

The modern motor car is the result of development on highly scientific lines. When faults develop or replacements are needed haphazard methods will not do. All adjustments must be scientifically exact to preserve the balance and efficiency of the machine.

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Is this where you live?



Portrait of the Seventh Earl of Hopetoun,  
the Rt Hon. John Hope, 1901

## HOPETOUN STREET, MITCHAM

**H**OPETOUN Street is situated south of the railway line that leads eastward towards Heatherdale Station. The curved tree-lined street enters Somers Street near the Somers Trail and ends at Brunswick Road.

John Adrian Louis Hope, later to be Lord Hopetoun (1860 -1908) was the only person to be both Governor of Victoria (1889-1895) and then Governor-General of Australia (1901-1902).

He was born in September 1860 at Hopetoun House, South Queensberry, Scotland, the eldest son of the 6th Earl. Educated first at Eton, he subsequently entered the Royal Military College; however, owing to poor health and his succeeding to his title at thirteen years of age, he was ultimately prevented from entering the army.

Hopetoun's time as Governor has been described as 'Victoria's first ornamental governor' owing to his displays of wealth, which irritated some people during the recession of the period – even though he often used his own funds. Notwithstanding, he was popular with the general public, who held elaborate farewell ceremonies for him, in both Sydney and Melbourne.

He continued to be plagued by ill health and died of pernicious anaemia at the Pyrenees city of Pau, France, on 29 February 1908, aged 48 years.

Source: ND6615

Yvonne Fitzmaurice

## DIARY DATES\*

Meetings are held at the Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex

**Saturday, 10 April**

**1.00pm General Meeting**

*Ross McMullin – Will Dyson, War Artist*

**Saturday, 5 June**

**1.00pm General Meeting**

*Jenny Briely – Vermont: A History*

**Saturday, 14 August**

**1.00pm Annual General Meeting**

*Rosalie Whalen – WHS*

**Saturday, 9 October**

**1.00pm General Meeting**

*Dr. Gary Presland – Correnderk*

**Saturday, 4 December**

**1.00pm General Meeting**

*TBC*

## 2021 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 13 March**

**Saturday 1 May**

**Saturday 3 July**

**Saturday 4 September**

**Saturday 6 November**

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

**\*All dates subject to Covid-safe conditions**

## STATISTICS

Photographs catalogued	-	4343
Artefacts catalogued	-	5000
Documents catalogued	-	7691
Museum visitors November–December	-	212



Facebook New Page 'likes' to date 992

# Kitty Windsor and the Railway Gates

(continued from page 3)

The constant standing in the cold weather caused chronic chilblains on her legs and feet, which the doctors could not find a treatment for. However, once a year a one-legged WW1 veteran would come round with two items for sale – excellent furniture polish and chilblain cream, both of which worked wonders. He visited all the gate keepers in Melbourne as many suffered from chilblains.

There were no warning bells to let the gate keepers know if trains were coming. Yes, there were timetables for trains; but when trains were running late or an unscheduled goods train came through it was up to the gate keeper to stand out in all weathers and wait for it.

On nights when the fog rolled in, the vision on the track towards Blackburn could be down to one hundred feet, with sound also depressed. On those nights a member of the Windsor family would place themselves along the side of the track, and would yell to each other “train coming”. This gave Kitty time to open the gates safely.

Road traffic was stopped by holding up her hand; then the gates were pushed out to close the road. The gates relied on a crude mechanism whereby a metal rod dragged on the ground until it caught on a plate in the centre of the crossing. If the catch failed to grab, the gates bounced back and hit Kitty. As today, the traffic was always impatient to get across, which made the opening of four gates very difficult at times. On one occasion she did not get the last gate fully open and had to throw herself out of the way just as the train caught the corner of the gate, flinging it so that it just missed Kitty. The gate ended up near the station.

Kitty’s mother Catherine fought constantly with the senior railway body to have bells installed at all railway crossings in order to make the job safer for gate keepers. Warning bells were finally installed at the Tunstall crossing – but only after the Windsor family had retired from the position.

Kitty knew every person in Tunstall, as passing through the gates all would say hello. Tommy Woodcock, Phar Lap’s trainer, had his stables in Braeside and would take his horses to Yarra Glen races via Tunstall. Kitty would give him some money to put a bet on a race. On his return he would give her the winnings or the bad news.

For all the hours she worked, seven days a week, she only received two weeks’ holiday and no superannuation, as that was for males only.

Kitty left the gates in 1950 to marry Fred Cottle, whom she had known since she first arrived in Tunstall.

*Fred Cottle*

## Where was I when . . .



### . . . Elvis died?

**T**HIS was the chance comment that started it all in the “catching up” emails during lockdown. And it certainly provided a variety of response!

*Judy Hall:*

I was and still am a huge fan of Elvis and I remember I was shopping in Harris Scarfe at Forest Hill when I heard the news over the speakers in the shop. Elvis died on my daughter’s 5th birthday and both my daughters went on to also being huge fans, with pictures on their walls as I had had as a teenager. To cheer me on days and of late I will still play my records and CDs to cheer me up.

*Chris Gray:*

I was walking up (or down) Whitehorse Rd in Deepdene, where I lived, and saw a newspaper headline “Elvis Death Drama”; and I immediately thought “Oh God! What are they doing to him now?” (There had been the Red West “tell-all” book etc. in the recent past). Then of course, I read the story and found out the truth. Quite an emotional trauma – it took a little while for it to sink in: The King is Dead!

*Yvonne Fitzmaurice:*

All I recall about him was his song *Wooden Heart* which was played loudly every Saturday night from the night club that was somewhere near BMH Hannover. Elvis was in Germany when I was there – never met him – different zones.

*Giselda Bannister:*

Why all the fuss! Sorry Judy! I do remember a conversation with a girl at school the following year. She was going on and on about her grief at hearing the “King” had died. I was in my first year at secondary school and was probably thinking something along the lines of – “what a lot of nonsense”!

## WHS Committee Contacts

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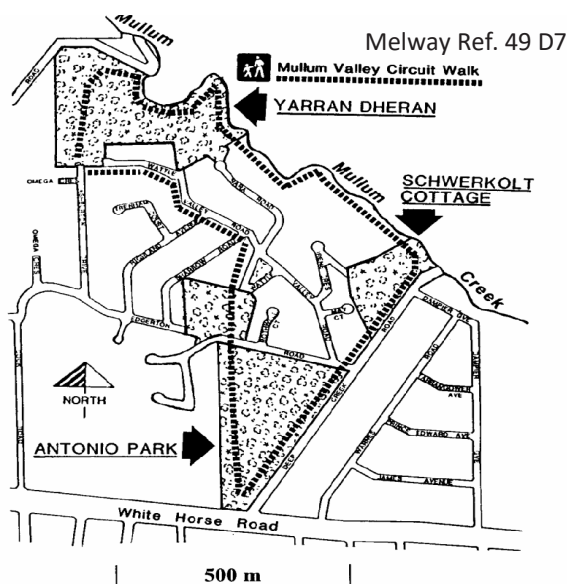
whitehorsehistory.org.au  
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**Copy Deadline for next WHS Newsletter: Wednesday, 3 March 2021**

## 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



### 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.*



THE WHITEHORSE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER IS PRINTED THROUGH THE COURTESY OF MICHAEL SUKKAR MP, FEDERAL MEMBER FOR DEAKIN

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