

## VIVAT 1950s!

During lockdown earlier this year, Kathy invited us to recall growing up in the 1950s, as this would be the theme for Whitehorse Heritage Week. Brian Millane was an eager respondent: I'll let him take over from here.

I was lying in bed trying to get to sleep and so many vivid visions of the 1950s swirled around my restless mind.

All us kids seemed to have permanently dirty necks. Only the main roads were paved and there was a lot of dust in the air from the quarries as well. The dust combined with our sweat and formed a grimy layer that had Mum demanding we scrub behind our ears.

Like so many locals, we were shod with the cheapest footwear. In my case, I was proud when I got a pair of sturdy boots that had soles made from car tyres . . . yes, they even had the proper tread. But I got teased about them at school.

The daily train trip from Mitcham to Camberwell for school was always an adventure: the old red rattler carriages were always packed with workers and kids from other schools. You never got a seat before Box Hill and often not at all. But sights along the way were of interest: cars at level crossings; maybe a friend – or an enemy – on a station trying to get on; and the huge steam-powered log splitter in the wood yard at Chatham.

In 1952 and '53, I had a couple of great male teachers, but by 1957, at the same school, I had been verbally and physically abused by three other male teachers and the headmaster. It was normal for boys to be thrashed as a way of imposing discipline. I often wonder if the teachers of those days were capable of managing the huge classes they had responsibility for, so that fear became a way of keeping the kids in line.

I was a sporty type. Sports days were always my favourite school days. Each week, we got at least a half a day away from the classroom to go and play in teams with our friends.

*(continued on page 7)*



PICTURES (above): Millane Brothers tyre racing;  
(below) Mitcham railway station in the 1950s.





# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

*Dear Members*

I thought that I would not have much to write about with us being in lockdown again, but a surprising number of things seem to have happened.

Our AGM proceeded on-line with all current Committee members being re-elected to their positions. We also welcome Patricia Fincham to the Committee. Patricia is a Wednesday Worker and is also involved in the Heatherdale Community so we look forward to her contribution to our Committee.

I also have some sad news. Joyce Suto passed away on 14 August 2021. Joyce was born on 25 March 1924. Joyce had moved to Tasmania to be near her daughter Julie and grand-daughter Rachael. She was a very dedicated member of our Society and we will include an obituary on her in the next newsletter.

Rob (mainly) and Kathy and I have been working auditing and releasing our records on Victorian Collections so that we now have 6,821 on view. We have already had some response from the public. A query regarding a motor cycle in one of our old photographs lead to information from a researcher on the history of



the brand of motor cycle, Clifton. This week we received valuable information on the AWA radiogram from the original designer. We have access to all our records that are not yet available to the public.

Heritage Week proceeded on-line this year and thanks to Kathy we had two presentations. These are still on the Council's website, under Heritage Week

2021 – The Suburban Dream 1950s, if you would like to have a look. The titles are “Schoolyard Fun in the 1950s” and “Being a Kid in the 1950s”. Many of our Wednesday workers provided photos, items and information for these presentations. Thanks go to Kathy for her many hours of work on the project and to those who contributed their memories.

For something to look forward to, Kathy is presently working with Rosalie on a digital presentation on the Three Schwerkolt Houses on the property, which will be added to our website.

The Wednesday Workers are having Wednesday chats on Zoom. Kathy has attended a Royal Historical Society Forum on Zoom, Kathy and I attended a Nunawading Library talk by Nicole Jenkins on 1950s Fashion as part of Heritage Week on Zoom and I attended the AEOHS AGM on Zoom. In July I attended the Community Consultation Forum on Strathdon House – also on Zoom. It was well attended and the Feedback from the Community was listened to and all points raised were answered carefully.

At the Cottage the Wisteria, Banksia and Bay Tree have all been pruned back with some more work to be done. The roots of the Bay Tree are to be pruned back to stop the invasion under the Cottage. The Banksia was pruned back to a stump as the weight of it was pushing on the Barn. The Wisteria has been cut back to stop it invading the gutters and to stop people having to stoop to step onto the verandah. It is starting to flower. Also at the Complex the new paths are looking very settled in now.

We have also received a Community Equipment Grant from the City of Whitehorse for us to purchase a new scanner for our large documents and also a Community Grant to fund the display panels for the revamp of the Visitor Centre and the production and printing of a brochure on the Museum.

We will let you know about Meetings and access to the Local History Room, as and when they can occur.

Keep safe

*Wicki Jones Evans*

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# LIFE STORY OF THE LATE ALF BLOOM

LOCAL ADVERTISER, 6 February 1963

**T**HE following is the life story of Mr. Alf Bloom as told to the *Advertiser* just before his death.

Mr Bloom passed away suddenly on December 2nd at the Mitcham bowling green, a club for which he helped in many ways.

Mr F.A. Bloom can lay claim to being one of the oldest inhabitants of Mitcham. He arrived here from the far lands of Doncaster in 1902, a young man determined to make good with thirty-five acres of virgin bush, which he turned into an orchard. For the first few years he "batched" in a lean-to hut somewhere in the area of Brunswick Road and Hopetoun Street. By 1905 he had added another 80 acres of land, and had land on both sides of the railway line.

In 1910 he made the concrete bricks to build his house, and when three of the rooms were completed he married a Miss Maggs, from Ringwood. It is interesting to note that, because of the isolation and lack of population, she was considered a local girl.

Alf Bloom worked hard. To augment the return from his young orchard he carted wood, and sold it in Johnson at St. Mark's kindergarten street, Fitzroy, for the princely sum of 30/- for five tons. He also dug clay and carted it through the bush to the tile works. Through hard work and wise buying he added more acres, and was in a position years later to sell 15 acres to the Council, to make what is now Bloom's Reserve.

It helps to put things into perspective to talk with a man of Mr Bloom's age. One point of interest is hat rate on 36 acres totalled £2 a year, in the times when Nunawading was still part of Box Hill, before our own council was formed; but even more enlightening is his talk of hard times. When reviewing his life and progress as a business man, the question arose of recessions.

"Oh," said Mr Bloom, "there was a bit of depression in the late twenties, I think . . . but nothing like the times of 1890."

To a generation reared on the hardships involved during the last depression his remarks provide food for thought.

A business man who tried his luck at many kinds of commerce, he reminisced that he was offered the Reserve Hotel for £700, but considered it too dear. This was at a time when land in Whitehorse road, close to the station area, sold for £1 per foot, when the cricket team played behind what is now the Memorial Hall, when three trains went through Mitcham each day and the Walkers owned the tile works.

(continued on page 6)



PICTURES: NP4048 (detail) Mr & Mrs Bloom (formerly Miss Jane Maggs); 1940s Real Estate poster

## Bloom's Sunrise Estate MITCHAM

500 feet above Sea Level  
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# HELLO AGAIN!

**T**HANKS to Covid-19, I was perusing my photo albums and noticed a fellow traveller in 1994 by the name of Giselda Bannister. Could it be OUR Giselda, who despite working as a midwife, arranges her schedule to have Wednesdays free in order for her to work with the Whitehorse Historical Society Working group? Yes, indeed it was. Amazingly neither of us remembered the other from the trip but we each had photo albums to compare the experience which is as follows.

In September 1994, I decided to join a Council of Adult Education course to study West Australian wildflowers, which involved a comprehensive eight-day tour by bus from Perth, through the Stirling Ranges to Albany and returning around the coast back to Perth.

The route had been thoroughly researched to include as many wildflower species as possible. This meant securing a bus line prepared to travel off the bitumen and Statesman Tours were prepared to take us 30 participants.

Early on in the trip, the bus needed to engage reverse gear, but despite the dreadful noises, it never happened. So it meant all of us piling out each time and pushing the bus back to where we could proceed in a forward direction!

Day 3 took us through the Stirling Ranges where 1000 flowering species occur and 60 of them are endemic to the area. We were blissfully heading up to Bluff Knoll, but soon became aware that the gradient was too steep for the bus and we came to a grinding halt!! The driver

very slowly and carefully released the brakes and eased the bus downhill into the road embankment which fortunately was there to rescue us! (No reverse gear needed this time)!

It was now late afternoon and we knew it would be a long time before we would be rescued from such a remote spot, so we took full advantage of the time and scattered in various directions in search of all these rare wildflower species.

Apparently news of our dilemma trickled into the media and early accounts stated that there had been a mishap in the Stirling Ranges involving a bus and that people were scattered all over the mountain! Before dark, rescue vehicles of all shapes and sizes had been mustered from far and wide and made their way to assist us off the mountain – including the local paddy wagon!

At great expense, a heavy duty haulage vehicle took care of our bus and returned it to level ground, where we all piled on and arrived in Albany at 9pm for our 6pm dinner!

Thereafter we travelled on level ground without further incident. It was a great trip and we learned a lot.

Giselda remembers how magnificent King George Sound was at Albany, and the fact that it is equal to or greater in size than Sydney Harbour; also that it was from there that our troops all left for Gallipoli. She was also struck by the sight of the Southern Ocean meeting the Indian Ocean off the lighthouse at Cape Leeuwin near

Augusta as she has a fascination for lighthouses and used to think she would enjoy living in one. (Not now – imagine having to climb all those stairs every day!)

My most enduring memory was the motel smorgasbord at Pemberton where the desserts were so enticing that I ate five different ones following the first two courses! I still remember the pavlova, cheesecake, chocolate mousse and apple crumble, followed by fruit salad to make it healthy. Four years later I returned there in great anticipation with my husband – but maybe they had a new cook. I left disappointed!

*Rosalie Whalen*



PICTURE: The little (well, big) bus that couldn't quite . . .

## COUNCIL OBJECTS.

Strong objection was offered by Box Hill City Council on Monday night to the proposed erection of a private mental home at the corner of Union and Belmore roads in Mont Albert north. Correspondence and a petition from eighty-six residents was read, the writers and signatories protesting vigorously. Cr. Gawler said the existence of such an establishment would have a detrimental effect on the whole area. It was improper, he considered, that it should be in such a position, particularly as there was a school quite close. A home like that ought to be built in some secluded spot. Although the proposed institution would not be in their city, he felt sure his colleagues would join with him in protesting against it being erected. Cr. Gawler moved that the Camberwell Council be asked to join with Box Hill in a deputation to the Chief Secretary asking that permission be not granted, and that members of parliament be also requested to oppose the scheme. Cr. Hogan seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously.

## AMERICAN AUTHOR WRITES "E-LESS" NOVEL.

An American author has just written a novel of 50,000 words, and there isn't a letter "e" in it. After having read that the letter "e" appears more often than any other letter he got to work.

The first thing was to tie the "e" bar of his typewriter down, and the next was to avoid such pronouns as "she," "he," and "them." The problem of past tense verbs such as "wanted" made him think a bit, but he worked it all out. His characters had to "want" instead.

Bob was the hero, but a critic pointed out that the full name would be Robert. So the author changed the name to Frank. Here is a sample of the style:

"Now, an approach to a young girl's 'big day' is not always just as that girl might wish. Small things bob up which at first look actually disastrous for a joyous occasion: and for Nancy and Frank just such things did bob up—for on May third a pouring rain and whistling wind put Branton Hill's spirits way, way low."

But now the author has a real difficulty. His name is Ernest Vincent Wright, and there are three e's in it.

## EDUCATION AND TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS.

That children of school age are encouraged to run traffic risks by the training afforded under the "new curriculum" adopted during the last four years, is the opinion of a Melbourne medical man as expressed to the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria. The system is designed to develop initiative at a stage in life, he says, when there is already too much initiative to be balanced by control, one result being that small children often walk in front of cars, defying their drivers.

## DANGER OF DIMMING.

Further sad evidence of the soundness of the advice so often given by the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria not to dim headlights was afforded recently by the death of a pedestrian at Oakleigh, when he was struck by a car, the driver of which had dimmed his lights to pass another vehicle. Dipping the lights, which is quite a different thing and is possible with every modern car and is cheaply applicable to older models, has everything to recommend it, as adequate light is still available for safe driving provided speed is slightly reduced to compensate for the shorter range of the light in the dipped position.

## WILL IT COME TRUE?

About thirty-three years ago the Wright Brothers solved the problem of flight in heavier-than-air machines. Ever since then crackpot inventors and imaginative writers have predicted from time to time, that in a few years everybody would be flying in the same casual way that we now use automobiles. There are now very definite reasons why such a prediction would be in order (says Malcolm B. Ronald, Licensed pilot and newspaper editor). As a matter of fact, it is likely that within ten years the solid citizen who buys an automobile will have the option of buying a ground-gripper or one that can fly. Sufficient progress has been made in the development of foolproof flying machines so that there is little doubt that within a few years a well-proved flying automobile will be available. I believe that by 1946 conservative citizens will be using automobiles that can fly. The preliminary ground work has been laid.

Sunday-school Teacher: "Can any of you little girls tell me who lived in the Garden of Eden?"

"Yes, Teacher—the Adamases."



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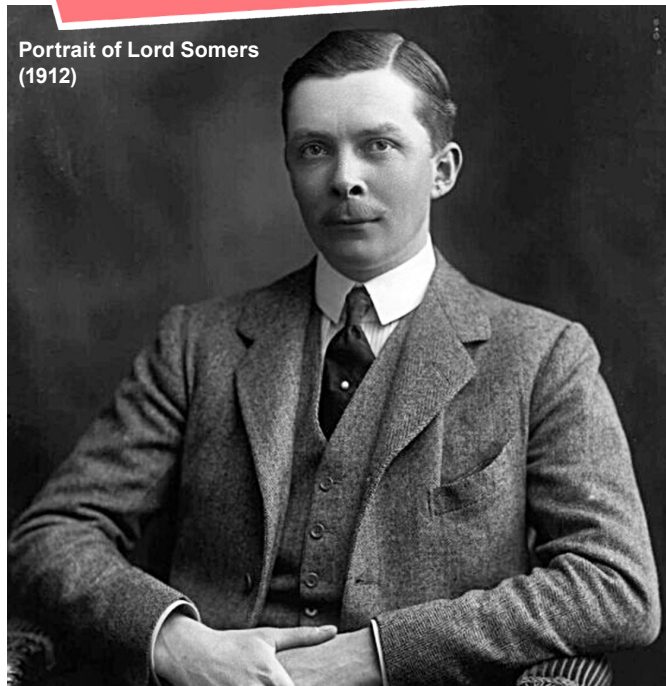
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## LIFE STORY OF THE LATE ALF BLOOM

(continued from page 3)



Portrait of Lord Somers (1912)

### SOMERS STREET, MITCHAM

**A**RTHUR Herbert Tennyson Somers (1887-1944), the 16th Governor of Victoria, was born at Freshwater in the Isle of Wight, the second child of a Coldstream Guards Officer. In 1896, when he and his sister were orphaned, they were brought up by relatives, who kept them in touch with artistic and literary figures (Alfred Lord Tennyson was his godfather.) He became the 6th Baron Somers at age of 12 and was educated at Charterhouse and New College, Oxford. In 1906 he joined the Life Guards. On leave and before rejoining his regiment in 1914 he had farmed in Canada. At Ypres he was twice wounded and by 1918 commanded the 6th Battalion of the New Tank Corps. Somers was mentioned in dispatches, awarded the Military Cross and Distinguished Service Order, and appointed to the Legion d'honneur.

He was considered to be a warm and generous man with a genuine interest in people. Coupled with a high sense of duty and leadership, Somers was a shrewd and successful governor from 1926 to 1931 and was respected by politicians, although he privately lamented their lack of political ability.

His especial interest was in youth, Freemasonry, flora and fauna, music, 'Toc H' and returned servicemen. In 1929, at his own expense, he brought together teenage boys from different backgrounds to what was to be named Lord Somers' Camp and Power House, a youth organization which still continues.

His interest in the Scouting movement remained with him until his death from throat cancer in 1944, aged 57 years, at his home, Eastnor Castle, Ledbury, Herefordshire, England.

Source: ND6615

Yvonne Fitzmaurice

As the years went by, Mr Bloom added more rooms to his house and planted a delightful garden to surround it. Through his actions we have Bloom's Reserve (see box below), and some thought should be given to preserving his house as a reminder of past times. Perhaps the house alone would fail to re-capture the atmosphere without the towering hedge and cool depths of shade sheltering the lush clover between the trees of the orchard.

Here in Mitcham is a house with its stables at the rear. In one shed is a vintage wagon to delight the young and fill their minds with vivid imagination. Another shed has an anvil and forge. Hanging outside is an old hay-basket from which his horses pulled the strands of hay.

The stable is used today; not for its original purpose, but by hordes of children who use it to help provide the 'real thing' for games of Cowboys and Indians, and the girls playhouse and shop. Another shed is used to store Mitcham Chamber of Commerce decorations.

If you are feeling the tension of present day life, if the hustle and bustle is too much, make some excuse to visit this oasis of peace, quiet and charm.

On a hot day the shade is deep, and the scent of the lemon blossom hangs heavily. The garden is overgrown and is not spoiled by careful trimming but it is in the orchard where true calm prevails.

The late Mr Bloom is survived by a son, Harold, a daughter-in-law and two grand-children.

Denise Moorhouse

### SIMPSON PARK / BLOOM'S RESERVE

Frederick Alfred Bloom acquired 34 acres 2 roods 22 perches of land in 1908 and settled there with a home on Whitehorse Road. He subsequently consolidated the property over various transactions and his orchard can be seen in the 1945 aerial photo of this portion on Whitehorse Maps.

Bloom first leased land to the City of Nunawading in August 1951 and the sale to the City was registered in March 1959, the original name for the park being Bloom's Reserve.

City of Nunawading Correspondence indicates that the name was changed from Bloom's Reserve to Simpson Park some time in 1973.

It is possible/probable that the re-naming of Bloom's Reserve to Simpson Park is in reference to the proximity of Simpson Street.

(With thanks for Anne Jones's research)

## DIARY DATES\*

Meetings are held at the Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex

### Saturday, 9 October 1.00pm General Meeting

*Jenny Brash – Vermont: A History*

*Speaker cancelled due to Covid lockdown*

### Saturday, 4 December 1.00pm General Meeting

*Rachael Cottle – Women of the Victorian Railways*

## 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 6 November

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

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

## OUR COMMITTEE

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

### Committee Members

Margaret Graham	Rob Innes
Harley Hall	Chris Gray
Judith Hall	Patricia Fincham

## STATISTICS

Photographs catalogued	-	4446
Artefacts catalogued	-	5045
Documents catalogued	-	7776
Museum visitors July–August		N/A



Facebook Page 'likes' to date

1005

# VIVAT 1950s!

(continued from page 1)

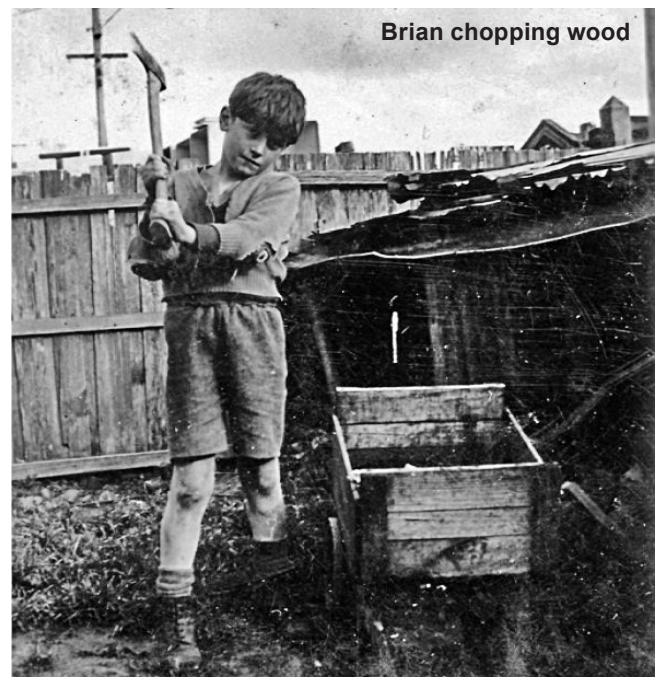
We knew many local kids in Mitcham and our parents warned us all about who we should and shouldn't mix with. I remember the chants wafting across the vast Whitehorse Road reserve on many Sundays as we walked down to mass while the "Proddy's" were on their way to or from their own churches: "Catholic dogs smell like frogs . . . and don't eat meat on Friday". If the parents weren't present, we would deliver some ripe rejoinder in a similar vein.

We loved all those Saturday morning serials on the radio: the young'uns avidly following 'The Faraway Tree' and 'The Famous Five' while we older kids huddled over the wireless set desperate not to miss a syllable of 'Tarzan King of the Jungle' or 'Biggles' or 'Hop Harrigan' as Mum clattered around the kitchen, dodging the throng as she rustled up our dinner.

The kitchen was the warmest place in the house. We had a fireplace in the living room but it was only lit on Sundays, after church. Mum cooked on the wood stove all year round: in summer the kitchen was like an oven. The warm food smells were a magnet for flies and I don't remember a season when the kitchen wasn't buzzing. Dad hung several fly papers from the ceiling, like twisted decorations to attract the flies. They were most unattractive when covered in insects.

Every so often, a big truck would back into our yard and tip seven tons of firewood. The 'oldies' had to stack it all into low sheds that had once housed chickens. One of my chores was to bring wood up for the kitchen stove; sometimes, I had to split some of it for kindling.

Ah, the memories! There are many more where those came from!



Brian chopping wood

## 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

Rear Museum Building  
Schwerkolt Complex  
2 – 10 Deep Creek Road, Mitcham

### Newsletter Team

Chris Gray  
Wendy Standfield

### WHS website

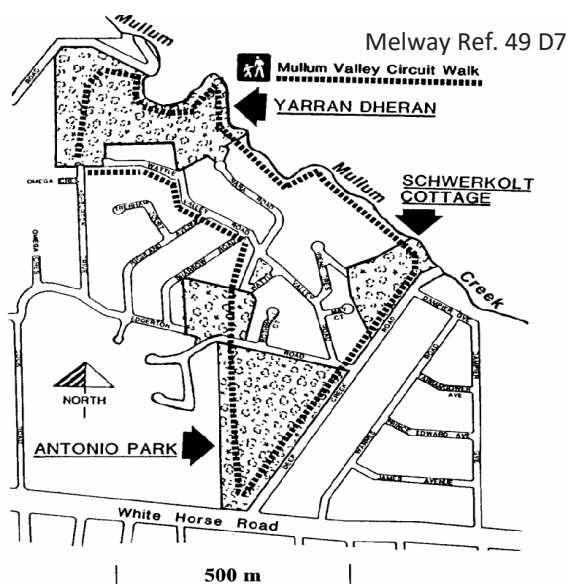
whitehorsehistory.org.au  
facebook.com/whitehorsehistory

### Email

whitehorsehistory@hotmail.com

### Postal Address

P.O. Box 272  
MITCHAM Vic 3132



**Copy Deadline for next WHS Newsletter: Wednesday, 10 November 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



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.*



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

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