



# NEWSLETTER

Series 29 No. 6

November–December 2021

ABN 44 352 041 634 Inc. AO 012235J

## A Schwerkolt Christmas poem

### The Old Stone House

The old Stone House on the brow of the hill  
Below is the creek, both rocky and still  
With tall spreading gums in paddocks nearby  
Where thrushes sing, and storm winds cry—

Starlings and sparrows in the roof overhead,  
Chattering all day, could waken the dead.  
Old Mosses's departed, may have gone West  
Age got him under, all for the best—

Oh what a tale the old shack could tell  
With parties and dances, then "merry hell"  
The old wine cellar on the fringe of the hill  
Gave vent to their feelings, when glasses they'd fill—

My missus sleeps peacefully in a bed like a boat  
Dreaming of nothing, but "Flovie" the goat  
She's always ready to argue the toss—  
Wears the trousers, but Mike is the boss.

Down through the gum trees, picture comic and sat.—  
Together with Moira, playing her part.  
One with the shovel, the other the hoe—  
Sowing the seeds, expected to grow—

With a broader view, and a saner life  
Would keep us all from meeting strife  
The old year is passing, let's welcome the new:  
With these closing lines, Cheerly Xmas to you.

Mike



(Above) Mike who, lived in Schwerkolt Cottage during the 1950s, in front of the cottage; (Left) Poem by Mike, sent with a Christmas card circa 1957.

**NEXT  
MEETING:**

**Saturday, 4 December 1.00pm General Meeting**

Rachael Cottle – A Page for Womenfolk



# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

*Dear Members*

**A**NOTHER year is coming to an end – where did it go? Our Wednesday Workers are back to the split shift of half in the morning and half in the afternoon and looking forward to our next step of all together. We are all double vaccinated with certificates and wearing masks which is the requirement to visit our Local History Room.

It looks as if we will no longer be subject to 1 person per 4 square metres by our December meeting so hopefully we will be able to meet in person. Our Speaker is Rachael Cottle on “A Page for Womenfolk” about the representation of women in the Victorian Railways Magazine. The meeting will be held by Zoom if the number restriction is still in force. **We will notify you as the circumstances change.**

Kathy, Rosalie and Chris have been busy with the videos on the history of Schwerkolt property. We now have on our website a link to our YouTube presentations on “The Houses on the Schwerkolt Property” and “The

Schwerkolt Property Outbuildings”. During the lockdown Rosalie, who is the Schwerkolt family’s historian, started looking through the family documents and photographs and some interesting information has come to light. In the process of preparing these presentation we have found the dates of the building of the three houses and their number of rooms.

The second presentation on the Outbuildings was just as interesting as it uncovered who built which building and when. This involved enquiries reaching out to Rotary clubs and also George Cox who was a founding Committee member of the Cottage. George is now helping Kathy with her next video on the Furnishing of the Cottage. Some more information is sure to come to light.

After learning how to add a YouTube presentation on our website Chris has changed our Dolls House presentation and it is now much clearer. Chris has also added some short stories from our history and plans to add some more.

Rob has been adding more records to the public view of Victorian Collections and we currently have over 10,000 records on view. Rob is also training people in the use of our fabulous new scanner that was courtesy of our Community Equipment Grant from Whitehorse Council.

Our first task on returning to the Local History Room was to install the Olympics display in the Visitor Centre. Bob Gardiner has kindly lent his 1956 Olympic treasures and combined with items from our Collection we have a great display. This display was planned to be part of our 2021 Heritage Week Theme of the 1950s. We have just squeaked into 2021.

The Museum & Cottage reopened on the 6 November after Council cleaning of the Museum and Visitor Centre and our Working Bee on that morning. Julie Jones is now on Long Service Leave and one of the attendants, Sophie Honeyman is filling in for Julie.

I hope to see you in person at our meeting to wish you a Merry and Safe Christmas.

*Vicki Jones Evans*

Rachael Cottle  
(Deakin University)  
speaks on

**“A PAGE FOR WOMEN-FOLK”**  
THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE VICTORIAN RAILWAYS MAGAZINE

**1pm Saturday, 4 December**

## CONTENTS

President’s Report	2
Three Score Years and One	3
VALE Joyce Suto	4

From <i>The Reporter</i> , 1937	5
On show with MRG	6
Is This Where You Live?	7
Diary Dates	7

## THREE SCORE YEARS AND ONE: FACTS AND FABLES OF MITCHAM AND DISTRICT

THE following article of the history of Mitcham and district has been written by Denise Moorhouse, in collaboration with old identities, especially for the "Advertiser".

In the articles some of the old stories will be found both interesting and humorous. Watch the columns of the "Advertiser" weekly and read how Mitcham and district has progressed.

Mitcham and district at the turn of the century. The Bill for the federation of the States had passed all stages, and Victorians would no longer have to pay import duty on certain goods coming from that serious competitor, New South Wales.

Australia was recovering from the recession following the land boom and crash of the 1880s. Australian private banks were relieved of the expenses and trouble of printing their own individual bank notes; the Commonwealth now printed all notes.

The Shire of Nunwading had a population of a little over 3,000. Mitcham was a lazy small country town with only one store, one secondary industry (the tile works) and two hotels, neither of which could boast a roaring trade.

At two o'clock on a hot Saturday afternoon in the 1900s a customer walked into the bar of the Hill Hotel. The flies left his back as he entered the shaded darkness of the bar.

"And what would I be getting you, Alf?" asked Mrs O'Callaghan, the wife of the licensee, as she put down the

sock she was mending and moved over to the barrel. Two wet sugar bags kept the barrel cold as it sat on the counter top.

"I'd like a lager, thanks."

"Well, now, and isn't that a co-incidence," she said with a look of amazement; "we had another customer today and he, too, wanted a lager".

So small was the business of the Hill Hotel, that the compensation paid the O'Callaghans when they relinquished their license amounted to no more than £500.

Before this happened, and while still in business, the Hill Hotel employed a rather comely scullery maid. Not that she served in the bar, but by occasionally peeking around the curtains she caught the eye of the son of the owners of the land which is now Halliday Park.

The townspeople regarded him as a spendthrift, and tongues wagged as to "What will happen to the money when his father dies?" Their blackest forecasts seemed likely to be fulfilled when he married the

scullery maid. But they were wrong. When his father died and left him the property, he sold most of it and wisely invested in land and houses, and by the 1930s was worth at least £26,000. The bright eyed scullery maid showed the world what happens when sparkling eyes and sparkling hock are mixed.

It is regretted that anonymity must be used. It is always undesirable, but, undesirable as it is, it is still preferable to a libel suit.

Mitcham's past is full of facts and figures; these facts and figures were made to happen by people. The stories behind the pioneers of Mitcham are as varied as they are colourful.

At the turn of the century the centre of the township was down close to Richards street, due to the proximity to the secondary industry. The post office was there and Tom Featherstone opened the first boot shop, close by. During the week he sold laced and button-up boots to the men and women of the town, but on

*(continued over page)*



NP3304: The Hill Hotel, circa 1900.

# VALE Joyce Caroline Suto 1924-2021



I only met Joyce a couple of years ago and had the privilege of driving her home a few times after Whitehorse Historical Society Meetings. What a privilege! A small, older Member with a very generous smile and a wealth of community knowledge and information stretching back to the earlier part of the last century both here and in England. Such 15-minute car trips are rare honours. Joyce and her late husband Louis and daughter Julie lived in Mitcham from the early 1960s and were very much involved in Mitcham life. Long-time member of both Whitehorse Historical Society and Mitcham (now Mount view) Presbyterian Church, Joyce gave to her community through her love and knowledge of books (she was a trained Librarian and had worked for the CSIRO). CSIRO built the first computer in Australia, and this computer was recommissioned in Melbourne in 1956 as CSIRAC – Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Automatic Computer. The CSIRAC is the only surviving first generation computer in the world and is now on permanent display at Scienceworks, Melbourne. Joyce would have known this computer, and doubtless sourced books and articles relevant to both its development and maintenance. Everybody needs and loves a Librarian! Especially Engineers and Scientists. A Librarian opened windows to their specialist world in those pre-Internet and jet setting conference days. Joyce was not only a Librarian, but she also had a broad general knowledge, and was happy to share information and opinions. She wrote poetry on a wide and varied number of subjects and loved being part of her community. She also wrote and is the published author of several books. Only recently, Joyce donated several personal items to the Whitehorse Historical Society Collection. One I especially remember is a hand knitted Fair Isle beret, doubtless the product of long winter wartime evenings. It is knitted from coloured darning wool in “Make Do and Mend” World War 2 Britain, when new knitting wool was rationed, but darning wool was not. This one small object is a wonderful reminder of women such as Joyce and their approach to life. VALE Joyce, you will be missed, but very well remembered by us all. A life well lived.

*Margaret Graham*

## THREE SCORE YEARS AND ONE: FACTS AND FABLES OF MITCHAM AND DISTRICT

*(continued from page 3)*

Saturday afternoon spent hours cutting the hair of the residents.

One of the most important men in the town was called Benteleigh. His job was to maintain the lamps in the town, kerosene lamps; they had to be filled, their wicks trimmed and lighted each night.

The job was not as onerous as could be imagined, as there were only three lamps in service. One was at the corner of Victoria and Station

Streets, one in Albert street (Mr. Walker lived there), and one at the intersection of Whitehorse road and Mitcham road. Mitcham has grown in all ways since the days of slow moving horse drawn vehicles moving along a dusty, potholed Whitehorse road. In this series it is hoped to combine facts and figures with some of the colour and verve of the characters of old Mitcham. History is like eating fruit cake; much more interesting if the cook has been liberal with the cherries.

# Blackburn & Mitcham Reporter

CIRCULATING IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF BLACKBURN AND MITCHAM AND DONCASTER.

Vol. 50 No. 48

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

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1937

PRICE: TWOPENCE

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# on show with MRG

**T**HE Mitcham Repertory Group began in 1952 with a membership of six; its first meeting being held in the home of Daphne Powell, (Warne Street, Mitcham) with the support of Max Grant and Phyl Mudge. All three had a keen interest in theatre, production and performance. Both Max and Phyl had been members of Murrumbene Music Society and Daphne had belonged to amateur dramatic societies in England prior to migration. MRG was preceded by the Albert Players, (named for a street in Mitcham), which had run to three productions before folding. Its remaining funds were held by their treasurer, Dick Hogg, who desired to form another performance group, and M.R.G. became the fortunate inheritor of these funds.

Eventually the Group was run by a general committee of five and a casting committee of three. A subscription list assisted with financing – an early aim of the group to be self-sufficient in equipment and

supplies, although initially the group relied on lighting, scenery, props and pick-ups from the CAE. Another aim was to promote and train its members in all aspects of stage craft. To this end study groups were held, run by members or guest speakers. The group's first production, *Quiet Weekend* debuted in 1953 in St David's Hall, Latrobe Street, Melbourne. Four days later its first performance in Mitcham Memorial Hall followed, the play having been chosen for its large cast and box office appeal.

Early problems faced by the group were in ticket sales and publicity. A subscriber's list went some way towards addressing funding issues and in time sales improved enough to enable fundraising for various charities – which had always been an MRG aim. Ironically, an application to the Premier's Cultural Fund to assist with equipment purchases was denied for this reason. However, an application to Nunawading City Council for the erection of a storage shed on the east side of the Mitcham Memorial Hall was successful; rental was charged at one shilling per year. This rental was increased after the shed was broken into and lighting equipment stolen! The once successful study groups, play readings and one-act plays, which served as a useful training ground for new members, had eventually to be suspended due to lack of interest – a great disappointment to dedicated members. A prepared production of *Summer of the 17th Doll* had to be abandoned when rights to produce the play were withdrawn from amateur

groups in 1961. In spite of setbacks, MRG had, by 1993, staged one hundred and thirty plays in forty years. It had attracted local sponsors and received good critiques in local and metropolitan newspapers.

A very early success was *The Pageant*, written by Daphne Powell and performed on Nunawading oval as the Royal Train passed by from Warburton, carrying the Queen and Prince Philip on the 1954 Royal Tour. The group was a regular entrant in the Victorian Dramatic League drama festivals and had successful collaborations with The Avenue Church Players (Blackburn), Maroondah Musical Society and Blackburn Players. A production of *Our Town*, entered in 1960 in competition at South Street Competition, Ballarat, won awards for: 'Best Play', 'Best Acted' and 'Best Produced'. In 1973 MRG performed the Victorian Premiere of *The Memorandum* by the Czechoslovakian playwright, Vaclav Havel, (later President of the post-Soviet-era Czech Republic). It was a regular participant in Australia Day events and mayoral concerts and had success at Moomba festivals and the Waverly Festival of Theatre.

After waiting for better premises for many years, a glimmer of hope appeared when, in 1976, Nunawading High School entered a joint venture with Nunawading Council to build a theatre and gym for the use of the school and community. MRG used the Lindsay Young Theatre until 1986 when it was able to hire (at 'community rates') the newly-opened Nunawading Arts Centre (later Whitehorse Centre).

By 2000, the MRG had almost folded. A new committee was formed and the rejuvenated group performed its 2000 season at Whitefriars College, Donvale, and planned its 2001 season to be performed at Vermont Secondary College.

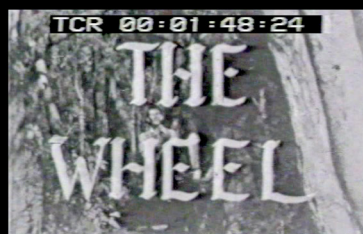
Among other services, a monthly MRG newsletter ran from 1958 until the 1980s. The group was approached to provide volunteers for the Talking Newspapers (a service to the visually impaired). Twelve members volunteered and provided long service to this organisation, while others tutored children in elocution, drama and acting. MRG sponsored the speech and drama sections in local Eisteddfods, providing adjudicators on occasion and funding the award of the Max Grant Trophy.

One of the MRG's more quirky and memorable associations was with the production of the film, *The Wheel*. Made by the Melbourne University Experimental Film Unit and shot at Blackburn Lake, it cast two MRG members in feature roles: Ron Fawcett and Malcolm Powell. Many other MRG members worked as extras, portraying convicts in this film about bushrangers and whose cast and crew camped at the Seventh Day Adventist camp site in Lake Road, Blackburn. Max Grant, MRG's founding member, attended its premiere at Union Theatre, University of Melbourne in May 1954.

This brief summary is only a glimpse of many years of dedication, hard work, innovation and inventiveness which brought so much enjoyment to the local community.

Giselda Bannister

(Below):  
*The Wheel* (1953),  
a copy of which is in  
the WHS collection.



## DIARY DATES\*

Meetings are held at the Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex

### Saturday, 4 December 1.00pm General Meeting

*Rachael Cottle – A Page for Womenfolk: the representation of women in the Victorian Railways Magazine*

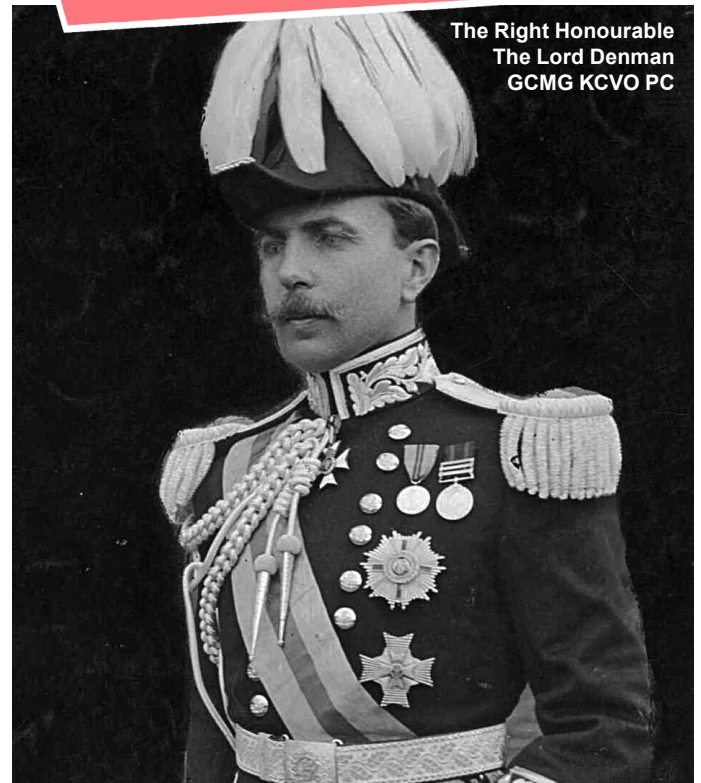
### Saturday, 12 February 2022 1.00pm General Meeting

*Jenny Brash – Vermont: A History*

### Saturday, 9 April 2022 1.00pm General Meeting

*Peter McPhee – Don't worry Boys, I'll Come Back in the Morning*

Is this where you live?



The Right Honourable  
The Lord Denman  
GCMG KCVO PC

## 2022 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 12 March**

**Saturday 7 May**

**Saturday 16 July**

**Saturday 3 September**

**Saturday 5 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	-	4446
Artefacts catalogued	-	5045
Documents catalogued	-	7776
Museum visitors Sept–Oct		<b>CLOSED</b>



Facebook Page 'likes' to date

1063

## DENMAN STREET, MITCHAM . . .

. . . runs between Dudley Street and Brunswick Road and is one of a group south of Whitehorse Road that cluster around Heatherdale railway station and are named after various Governors.

Thomas DENMAN, 3rd Baron DENMAN. (1874-1954) served as the fifth Governor-General of Australia from 1911-1914. He was appointed to the governor-generalship at the age of 36, and remains the youngest person to have held the position. Denman and his young family were immensely popular with the general public, and attempted to introduce a more relaxed atmosphere to Government House. He enjoyed friendly relations with Prime Minister Andrew Fisher, with whom he shared many similar political opinions. However, he suffered from ill health and returned to England after less than three years as governor-general. Denman never again held public office, but remained active in the House of Lords and briefly commanded a unit in the First World War. Born in London, he was educated at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. At 19 years of age he unexpectedly inherited his great-uncle's title and after marrying in 1903 into considerable wealth he devoted his time to politics as a Liberal in the House of Lords. The principal ceremonial occasion during his term was the inauguration of the Federal capital in 1912.

After returning to England, Baron Denman and his wife led a quiet life. Lady Denman's death on 2 June 1954 was followed on 24 June by Lord Denman's own, at Hove, Sussex.

Source: ND6615

Yvonne Fitzmaurice

## 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

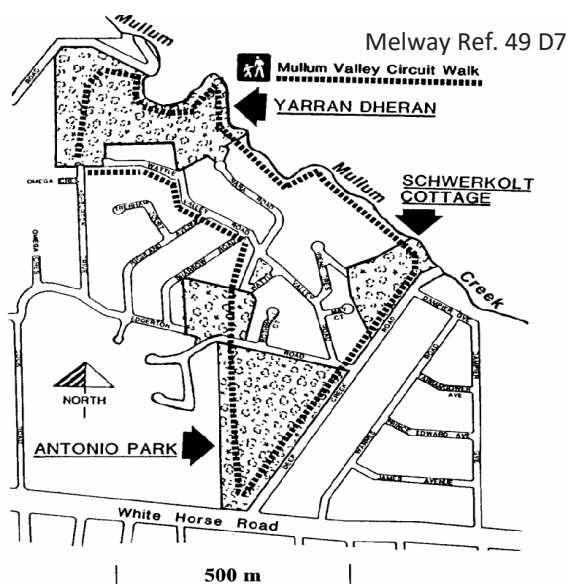
whitehorsehistory.org.au  
facebook.com/whitehorsehistory

### Email

whitehorsehistory@hotmail.com

### Postal Address

P.O. Box 272  
MITCHAM Vic 3132



**Copy Deadline for next WHS Newsletter: Wednesday, 12 January 2022**

## 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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Deep Creek Road, Mitcham, VIC 3132

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