



# NEWSLETTER

Series 29 No. 3

May–June 2021

ABN 44 352 041 634 Inc. AO 012235J

## BACK TO THE MEETINGS! ROSS McMULLIN TALKS ABOUT AN AUSTRALIAN GENIUS

**A**FTER a break of over a year thanks to the pandemic, we have at last had a return to the bi-monthly meetings; albeit still with a limit on the number of people who can attend. And our speakers began "not with a whimper, but a bang", as Ross McMullin launched into his talk on Will Dyson with enthusiasm that seemed to speak of the year he has waited to start.

Remarkably talented and versatile, Will Dyson was the first Australian official war artist, and Ross stated "I'm not alone in believing him to be our finest ever war artist, as well as our first. He was also a sublime writer of prose and poetry. He wrote about Australian soldiers as superbly as he drew them".

"The story of Will Dyson," said Ross, "is a love story. It is a story of his enduring love for his wife Ruby (sister of Norman Lindsay, and a successful artist in her own right); but also of his love and admiration for the Australian soldier.

"And yet it is also a story about Hate," he continued. "Dyson revered Australian soldiers and their achievements, but he utterly detested war." He went on to quote Dyson as saying "I'll never draw a line except to show war as the filthy business it is". This hatred for social inequality and

suffering would infuse his cartoons for his entire career.

However, Ross was quick to point out that Dyson, the passionate exponent of the soldiers' true story (he was twice wounded on the battlefield), and a zealous supporter of social reform, had a sense of humour that could often take one by surprise.

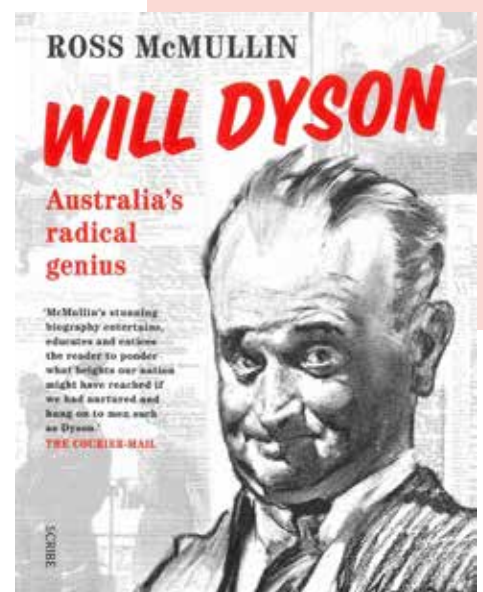
This sense of fun would often find its way into his work by way of witty captions that, whilst funny, were able to archly highlight the politically pompous balloons he sought to burst.

Of his move to London in 1909 to further his career, Dyson observed: "England used to send criminals to Australia, and we retaliated by sending artists to England!"

It was only after thoroughly acquainting us with Dyson the man, that Ross introduced some of the more usual biographical facts: that he was born in 1880 into a family to which creative talent was no stranger. His older brother, Ted, was an early influence on Will's work.

After suffering editorial oppression in Australia, Dyson made the journey to England, where he obtained a job with the *Daily Herald*, at which he was encouraged to "go for the jugular". Success followed.

(continued on page 3)



(Above): Ross, and his book on Will Dyson.

**NEXT MEETING:**

**General Meeting 1pm Saturday, 5 June 2021**

*Jenny Brash – Vermont: A History*



# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

*Dear Members*

IT was lovely to welcome members to the Local History Room for our first real meeting in over a year. Our speaker, Ross McMullin was very entertaining and informative. Members commented that it was a more relaxed and comfortable environment in the Local History Room than the Visitor Centre. It certainly took off the pressure to be out of the Visitor Centre by Opening time. Afterwards we all enjoyed the delicious afternoon tea and conversation.

On Tuesday 27 April we hosted a lunch for the Rotary Club of Mitcham. Kathy provided a wonderful selection of savoury and sweet dishes. The Rotary President, Ranjit Matthew presented the Society with a cheque for \$3,000 towards our Museum and Visitor Centre revamp. We are grateful to Rotary as this will assist with our new panels for the Visitor Centre and towards our new cases in the Museum.

At our working bee on 1 May our group dusted through the Cottage, the Museum and cleaned the Local History Room and the Orchard Shed.

Just before the first lockdown last year we had scheduled a meeting with Council regarding some concerns the Committee had with buildings and gardens within the Complex. That meeting had to be cancelled, but Kathy, Harley and I have now met with the General Manager for Infrastructure, Manager for Infrastructure, Acting Manager for ParksWide and the Leader for Arts and Cultural Services.

The problems with water run off causing soil erosion and blocked drains, which Council have been working on to solve, are to be addressed with some additional garden works near the Museum entrance and some concrete pathways. Concrete pathways are a reluctant option but gravel/scoria pathways have proved to have problems with blocking drains and as a hazard for pedestrians on slopes.

Pruning is to be undertaken on the wisteria to make it easier for people to walk on to the verandah at the entrance path, on the banksia rose to protect the barn from the weight of the bush and the bay tree to protect the Cottage and its verandah from root invasion.

Access to the disabled toilet at the rear of the Museum building is another concern that Council is looking to solve. The large eucalypt, an original tree on the site, which is now pushing against the rear of the building, adjacent to the disabled toilet, is being assessed.

Our database move to Victorian Collections has been delayed by working from home staff issues at their end, but will happen shortly. The Wednesday Workers are busy filling showcases, handling research enquiries, scanning documents, photographing artefacts, preparing for Heritage Week, undertaking secretarial duties and all the other duties that take place on Wednesdays.

Jenny Brash will be talking about the history of Vermont at the meeting on 5 June, so I hope you can come along. Please book in with Kathy if you are coming.

*Vicki Jones Evans*

## VERMONT: a history

JENNY Brash knows quite a lot about Vermont. She came to live as a 10-year-old at the end of WW2. Vermont was, at the time, very much a country town.

She attended Vermont State School from Grades 5 to 8, walking slowly along unmade roads to get there. In the late 1940s her father was a returned serviceman, and as such he was able to

acquire materials to build, in Vernal Avenue, a 'proper house' – distinct from the then common fibro cement. There are still family members living there.

Jenny has a long and continuing close relationship with Vermont – she still lives there, and knows lots of history and lots of stories about the district and looks forward to sharing them with us at our June 5 General Meeting.

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# APRIL MEETING REPORT

(continued from page 1)



He and Ruby became parents in 1911, and on a personal level, all was right with the world.

Then came the First World War.

Dyson's volunteering to go to France to provide a record of the Australian soldiers' war was a direct result of his hearing of the casualties sustained by them on the Western front. He wanted "... to interpret in a series of drawings, for national preservation, the sentiments and special Australian characteristics of our army". And his drawings were not of battles and vistas, but concentrated on the men. He drew exhaustion, endurance, grit and grime.

The description he wrote for one famous drawing *Stretcher Bearers* (see right) exemplifies the depth of feeling he could put into words, as well as the line of his pen: "*They moved with their stretchers like boats on a slowly tossing sea, rising and falling with the shell-ridden contours of what was yesterday no man's land. Slipping, sliding, with heels worn raw by the downward suck of the Somme mud.*"

Ross told of how eventually the war came to an end; but that for Will Dyson more heartache was to come. In March 1919 Ruby died of the Spanish Flu. Dyson was never the same again.

It was at this time that he produced what has been called the most outstanding political cartoons of all time: "Peace and Future Cannon Fodder", his prophetic response to the vindictive and evil Treaty of Versailles.

In 1925 Dyson returned to Australia, to work for the *Herald* group. Ross characterised his return as "socially successful; professionally less so". His cartoons were still inventive and clever, but they often lacked the searing power of those before the war.

Throughout the 1930s Dyson was forced by world events to direct his invective at a new crop of warmongers.

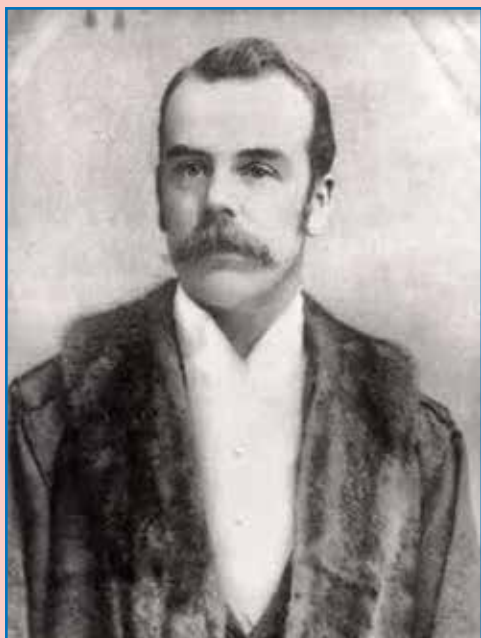
He died in January 1938, perhaps mercifully before the start of the war he had foreseen twenty years earlier.

Boswell



(Below):  
Our first, Covid-safe, audience





**PICTURES:** (above) Charles Edgerton circa 1880; (below) Carl Benno Schwerkolt, who sold Edgerton the Mitcham block of land.



# The Edgerton story

## Part Two: Moving to Mitcham

**I**N 1891 Benno Schwerkolt had purchased two 4-acre blocks on the southern boundary of his late father's property (the northern section of Crown Portion 128) from his brother Louis, who had inherited the land after his father Johann's death in 1887. The 3-acre block of land purchased by Edgerton was sold for £150 to him with timber and improvements thereon, and the 'rights to the runner of strawberries during next season and also to barrels and bees'.

The property had access to Deep Creek Road (at the time known as Schwerkolt's Road) via a private road.

While the centre of Mitcham was showing some development the land further east, close to the boundary of the Shire, in the area where Edgerton bought was still densely timbered with thick scrub. It can be assumed that Charles used the property as a weekend retreat. A newspaper article on the bushfire which swept through that part of Mitcham in February 1905 provides this brief description:

*'Mr Edgerton, who works in town and only lives on the selection at the end of each week... did a bit of bee farming'.*

Edgerton's cottage, as well as a number of others including the homes of Wathan, Schwerkolt, Kemp, Gilchrist and Antonio, were all burnt out in the fire as it moved up from the deep creek.

Tragedy struck the Edgerton family not many years later when in June 1908 Charles died following an operation from which he survived only a number of weeks. He was just 57 years of age. Charles is buried in in the Baptist Section at Melbourne General Cemetery with his wife Mary and their son Ernest. He left an estate of £18,286 with the property at Mitcham being valued at £150.

However, the Edgerton association with the Mitcham land did not end there as title documents show the property passed to his daughter Ada (Carnegie) who retained the property until 1935. Subsequent owners were Marion Emily Bullas, Philip Francois Herga, John Edward Rowson and Laurence Rothwell Smith. It was at some time during the Edgerton families more than forty years occupation that the private road giving access to the property was named Edgerton Road.

In 1978 the majority of the 3-acre block was sold to Tadstan Developments Pty Ltd, who subsequently subdivided the property with Rothwell Court. Lorna Smith, Laurence's widow retained the balance of the property and it was sold after her death in 1999 having been in the Smith family for over 50 years.

*Anne Jones*



# Blackburn & Mitcham Reporter

CIRCULATING IN THE MUNICIPALITIES OF BLACKBURN AND MITCHAM AND DONCASTER.

Vol. 50, No. 1

Registered at the General Post Office, Blackburn, as a Newspaper for Transmission by Post as a Second Class.

FRIDAY, JUNE 4, 1937.

PRICE: TWOPENCE

## VERMONT.

### EFFORT FOR MISSION.

Brightly coloured stalls, with attendants in quaint national costumes of different Eastern countries, filled the McKeon Hall last Saturday when members of St. Luke's Young People's Union held their Eastern Bazaar. The sweet stall was Japanese, the work stall Chinese, the produce Indian, and the senior boys had erected a thatched African hut in which were sold goods manufactured by the "natives." Afternoon tea was served on the stage, which was gaily decorated in pastel shades. Senior boys also conducted darts and a shooting gallery. Business was so brisk that, at an early hour, operations had to be wound up owing to all the goods having been sold. The proceeds, amounting to £13/5/5, are to be divided between "Our Own Missionary," Miss Amy Nethercote, who is stationed in India, and the C.M.S. added interest was given to the proceedings by the presence of Miss Nethercote, who is at present on furlough. At the conclusion the Rev. Jaden Gilbert, who was accompanied by his mother, addressed the children. The leaders of the Y.P.U. deserve commendation not only for the excellent result of the effort, but for their consistent work maintained throughout the year.

### SCOUTS' LOG BOOK.

On Friday, 28th May, the usual monthly games and pound night was held. After several games, the boys were brought into a horse shoe formation and an investiture rehearsal was held. This was a greater success than was expected. Next came some practice of a short sketch to be presented at the district camp fire on Luffman's Hill, Ringwood, the next day. This was followed by supper, after which the meeting closed with flag-down and a short prayer. On Saturday the 1st Vermont boys did well in a game which was participated in by all the troops of Nunawading District. The camp fire in the evening was a great success, Vermont's item being well received by those present.

## MITCHAM.

### INJURED BY EXPLOSION.

Last Friday while installing a large petrol tank Mr. Wai Tuck met with a serious accident. After making careful inquiry and inspection, and on being told that no petrol had been in the tank, Mr. Tuck descended into the excavation alongside the tank to effect some repairs. As soon as the hot soldering iron touched the tank, a loud explosion occurred. Mr. Tuck was severely burned about the face and head, and the collapsing tank injured his legs. He is recovering satisfactorily and hopes to be back at work in a few days.

### MITCHAM ROAD ACCIDENTS.

The fact that two accidents occurred on Mitcham road last Saturday might well lend colour to the opinion held by some people that the road is too narrow for the volume of traffic which it is now called upon to carry. In the morning, a lad named Witherow, bread carter's assistant, was run into by a car and injured slightly, the most damage being done to his cycle. In the evening, two motor trucks were returning loaded with footballers and supporters when one of the vehicles and a car, proceeding in opposite directions, came into contact whereby the car suffered slight damage.

### RUMOURED HOLD-UP.

It was rumoured in Box Hill last week-end that the E.S.&A. Bank in Station street had been held up. This was not the case. The lengthy stay of two strange motor cars which were parked immediately opposite the Bank, and the allegedly suspicious movements of the occupants were regarded with doubt by some of the adjacent business people. The local police were communicated with and Sergeant Simpson immediately went to the bank. Through one of the windows he inspected the cars after ringing for the police patrol. One of the cars was driven away, and just as the other was about to follow, the Sergeant walked over and kept the occupants in conversation until the arrival of the patrol. In answer to questions the visitors said something about coming to Box Hill to collect some betting money. The prompt action of the police is to be commended. Interviewed after, Sergeant Simpson said it was "better to be sure than sorry." A man will be charged with driving an unregistered car, and with not being in possession of a driver's licence.

**WALKER'S**  
at the STATION—GLENFERRIE

### Winter Specials

When you attend your favourite Football Team's next match, go prepared to withstand the Coldness of the weather, in other words, wear a Walker Overcoat. See special lines below.

#### 16/6 Men's Water-proof Reversible Rubber Coats.

Full belt style. You can't get wet in one of these Coats. Usually winter 21/- and 22/6 values.

Men's Winter Specials, 16/6 ea.

#### 37/6 Latest D. Textured Overcoats, Rain-proof.

Double breasted, with full belt, the very latest shades, white, red, fawn and grey. Every coat made with a warm check lining 42/- value.

Walker's Winter Specials, 37/6

#### 29/6 Men's Pure Wool Overcoats

Very latest patterns in Grey and Fawn, smart fitting D. Breasted or Russian style. Fully lined worth 39/6 to 47/6.

Walker's Winter Specials, 29/6

#### 4/11 pr. Men's Slippers.

The choicest of Men's Slippers, in broken ranges, Felt, Leather and Velvet. All leather soles. Sizes 5 to 14. Usually 5/11, 4/11 pair.

Walker's Winter Specials, 4/11 pair.

#### 15/11 Boys' New All Wool Dressing Gowns.

Smart stripe patterns, in tones of Blue, Green, Brown. All sizes available. Usually selling at 17/11 to 19/6. While they last.

Walker's Winter Specials, 15/11

#### 2/3 ea. Men's New Tweed Silk Lined Caps.

Very smart looking Caps, new patterns in Grey and Brown, in latest shapes. All sizes. Ideal for a cold winter day. Usually 2/11 each.

Walker's Winter Sale, 2/3 ea.

TELEPHONE: HAWTHORN 3301.

**REGENT**

Reservations, Phone WX1418.  
THURSDAY, FRIDAY, SATURDAY  
3rd, 4th, 5th JUNE.

Loretta Young

in

"Ramona"

"Ramona"

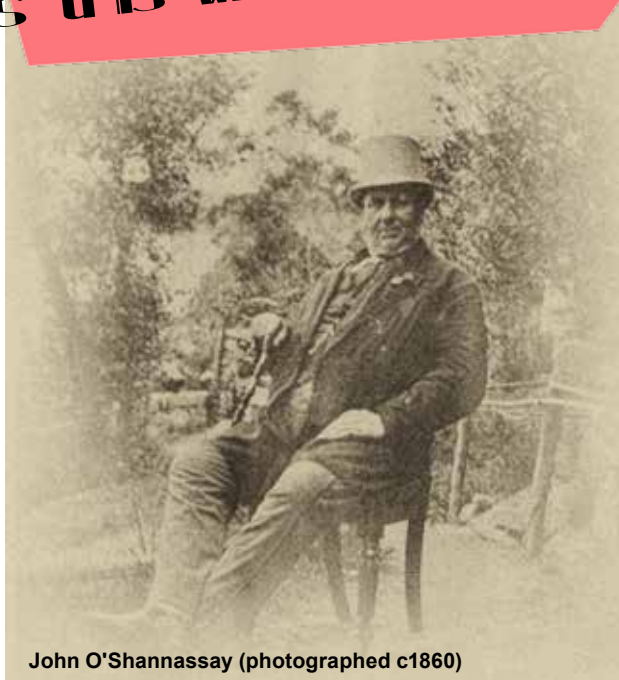
JANE DARWELL

in

\*"LAUGHING AT TROUBLE"  
CORONATION PICTURES OF KING  
GEORGE VI.

\*Approved by the Censor as Not Suitable for General Exhibition. All other features not so marked approved for General Exhibition.

Is this where you live?



John O'Shanassay (photographed c1860)

## O'SHANASSAY STREET, NUNAWADING

**T**HIS street is east of, and parallel to Springvale Road, and is between Springfield Road in the north and Whitehorse Road in the south. It was named after an Irishman, John O'Shanassay (1818-1883), who was born in Ballinahow, near Thurles, County Tipperary.

His schooling finished when his father died in 1831, after which he was apprenticed to a draper and wine and spirit merchant. He married in 1839 and shortly afterwards sailed for Australia, where initially he owned a small property. When this failed, they moved to Melbourne and opened a successful drapery business in Collins Street.

His political career began in 1846 when he won a by-election for the Melbourne Council. After the separation of Victoria in 1851, he became one of its first Legislative Council members.

He was founder and president (1845-51) of St Patrick's Society; a trustee of the Public Library; a Gold Commissioner; and he actively promoted land societies and the Colonial Bank.

Although John O'Shanassay (a big, bushy, stout-looking Irish gentleman) was considered by Governor Barkly as both common and rude, he was the ablest man of his time.

In 1853 he bought sixteen acres of land in Camberwell, where he subsequently built an imposing mansion, 'Tara', that had a commanding view of the city.

To the east, the village we now know as Burwood rejoiced in the name of Ballyshanassy in his honour, as its survey coincided with his taking office as Victorian premier for the second time in 1858.

His was knighted in 1874, retired from parliament in 1883 and died three months later, aged 65 years from complications of diabetes. He was buried in Melbourne General Cemetery, Carlton North.

Source: ND6615

Yvonne Fitzmaurice

## DIARY DATES\*

Meetings are held at the Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex

**Saturday, 5 June**

**1.00pm General Meeting**

*Jenny Brash – Vermont: A History*

**Saturday, 14 August**

**1.00pm Annual General Meeting**

*Helen Harris OAM – A personal perspective on Blackburn Open Air School (or how I learned to hate plum jam)*

**Saturday, 9 October**

**1.00pm General Meeting**

*Dr. Gary Presland – Coranderrk*

**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 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      | - | 4446 |
| Artefacts catalogued        | - | 5045 |
| Documents catalogued        | - | 7776 |
| Museum visitors March–April | - | 350  |



Facebook Page 'likes' to date

1026



# We have a winner!

George and Mary Hardcastle c1921

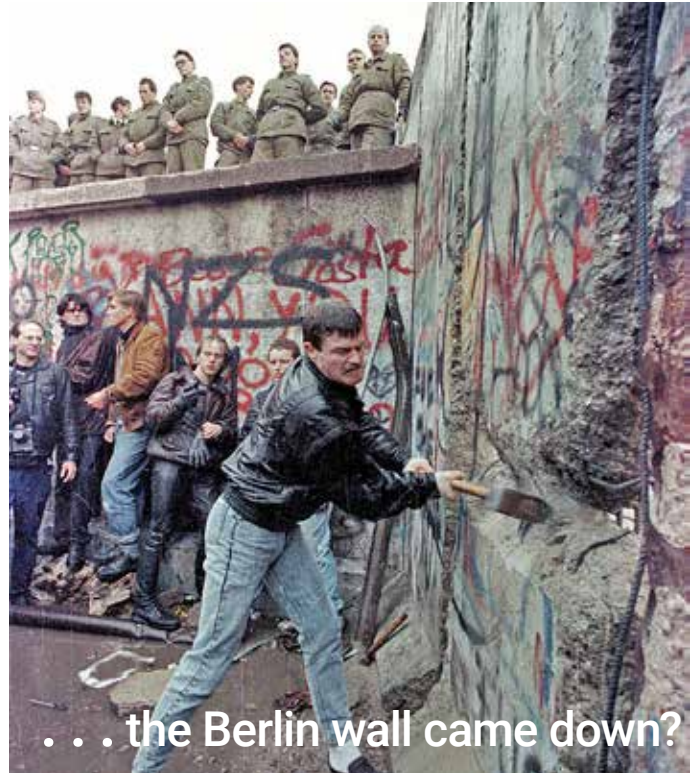


**I**N late 2019, the Victorian Baptist Historical Society advertised an essay competition. Essays were to be submitted by 1 August 2020 with a focus on one of two topics. I chose to focus on a Victorian Baptist who had played a significant role in church and/or community life. I had a ready-made candidate in the person of my maternal great grandfather, George Hardcastle, a Baptist Home Mission Pastor who served in various small Victorian towns from 1912. It occurred to me that comparing his life and career with that of his mentor and best friend would be an interesting approach. His friend, Rev J.H. Goble is still remembered with respect within the denomination. And a visit to Footscray Historical Society for research resulted in the relating of anecdotes by people who still remembered Goble personally. (He died in 1932). By contrast, George is unknown. However, in researching his work, it was clear he had played a significant part in the lives of the communities he served. A personal archive of photographs, documents and family anecdotes added interest.

As 2020 unfolded, the submission date was extended until December and judging was finally completed in mid-February. It was a great thrill to be awarded the essay prize on 13 March. The essay is to be published in the 2022 edition of *Our Yesterdays*, the Society's magazine and, apart from being offered twelve months membership, I have also been asked to speak at a Society meeting later this year. The actual prize will go towards suitable book purchases to enlarge my 'library' of history books. Grandpa George would be amazed!

*Giselda Bannister*

## Where was I when . . .



*by Giselda Bannister*

**S**UCH a hopeful moment. Seven months later I was on a tour to the Oberammergau Passion Play and we spent time in West Berlin and travelled in and out through East Berlin. Such a strange time – I did have the feeling of witnessing history in the making. Checkpoint Charlie was empty and abandoned. There was very little of the wall left and where there were still segments, people were chip-chipping away with hammers and chisels, obliterating it (and selling bits of it to gullible tourists – like me!). There were long, long queues of Eastern Europeans lining up outside all the big West German stores, including Aldi (unknown to us at that time), buying goods to take home to sell and make a profit on. About six of us 'ladies' from the group went into a Macdonalds one afternoon for coffee. While we were looking for a table I caught the eye of a gypsy woman who was scanning the crowd with her children. She quickly looked away, but my antennae immediately started 'pinging'. I very bossily said to my companions (some of them elderly), 'Come on ladies, we're not staying here'. To my astonishment, they complied. I don't know that I ever explained why, but I still remember the look on that gypsy woman's face when she realised her targets were eluding her! I remember another thing: the bus had to pull up one afternoon to let a detachment of armed East German soldiers go past on their way to the changing of the guard at the war memorial. Watching them goose-stepping and hearing the completely synchronised slapping of their boots hitting the pavement was chilling.

## WHS Committee Contacts

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9873 3383

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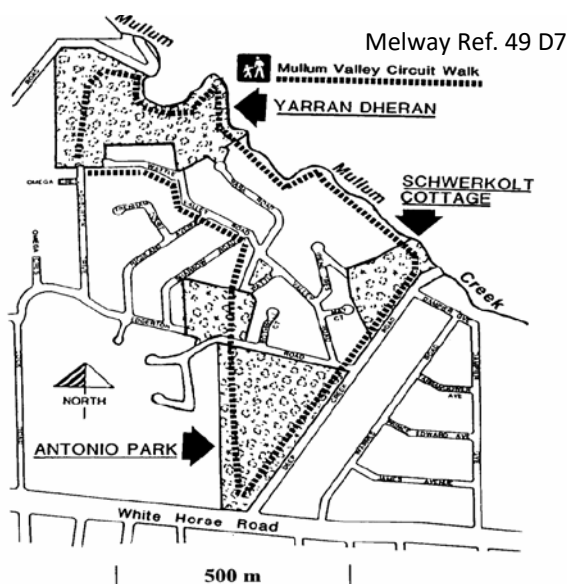
whitehorsehistory.org.au  
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### Postal Address

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MITCHAM Vic 3132



**Copy Deadline for next WHS Newsletter: Wednesday, 7 July 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

Sender: Whitehorse Historical Society Inc. & Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex

Deep Creek Road, Mitcham, VIC 3132

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