



# NEWSLETTER

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July–August 2024

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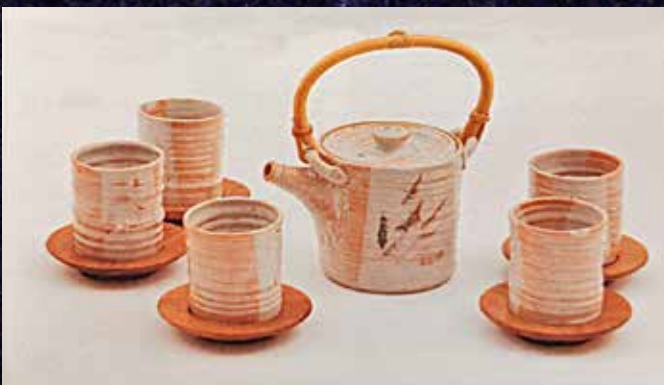
## Ritual: In service to a teapot

FROM 29 June to 11 August, WHS is hosting an exhibition which celebrates the artisan's skill in capturing our love of tea, represented by their handmade teapots. Drawn from the Whitehorse Art Collection, this exhibition showcased the ingenuity and craft of the teapot.

In Whitehorse, the Australian Brick & Tessellated Tile Company in Mitcham realised the potential of local clay when it was established in 1886. Its founder, Edgar Walker owned property in the surrounding streets named after Indian cities such as Surat Street. Around the same time, India was becoming the world's second largest producer of tea. These rich connections between clay and tea in Whitehorse show us the history and inspiration steeped into a teapot and how they reflect our community.

Whitehorse Art Collection features over 500 contemporary ceramic pieces which includes a major donation from Ceramics Victoria. The teapots displayed in the exhibition represented functional ware, education and for art's sake.

(LEFT): Mary Rasmussen - Teapot and cups with blackwood saucers, 1988.



**NEXT  
MEETING:**

**Saturday, 17 August 1.00pm Annual General Meeting**  
*Valda Arrowsmith OAM: Relaunching the Schwerkolt Cottage book*



# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

*Dear Members,*

**W**HITEHORSE Heritage Week is fast approaching and the biggest event is our Heritage Family Day on Sunday 15 September. The theme for this year is Whitehorse On Stage and, in addition to family day, there will be a display in the Museum and Visitor Centre. Donations to the cake stall would be most welcome together with assistance on the day. If you are able to help, please contact Kathy on 0409 230 058.

The working group have completed the revision of Ted Arrowsmith's book, *The Legacy of Johann August Schwerkolt, Pioneer*. Whitehorse City Council, as joint copyright holders of the book, have paid for the reprint and it will be launched by Valda Arrowsmith at our AGM on 17 August.

The Committee decided to use the \$2000 bequest from Joyce Suto to purchase a picture hanging system for the Museum to better display our photographs,

prints, paintings and framed items. This has been installed and we are currently looking to update the old prints.

Kerriane Stone, Arts and Heritage Officer at Council, organised July school holiday activities at the Complex. She has also installed a display of ceramics from the Whitehorse Art Collection in the Visitor Centre foyer. This is currently on display until 11 August. Kerriane also organised for this display to be part of Open House Melbourne at the Complex on Sunday 28 July, for which our Society will provide afternoon teas.

On a very cold and dreary last Saturday in June, a few of us Wednesday volunteers attended the Association of Eastern Historical Societies 2024 Conference at a very warm Lilydale Lake Convention Centre. The Theme was "The Value of Local History – Into the Future" and a total of 113 participants listened to a variety of interesting speakers in a packed program.

*Vicki Jones-Evans*



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## The Wandinong Story

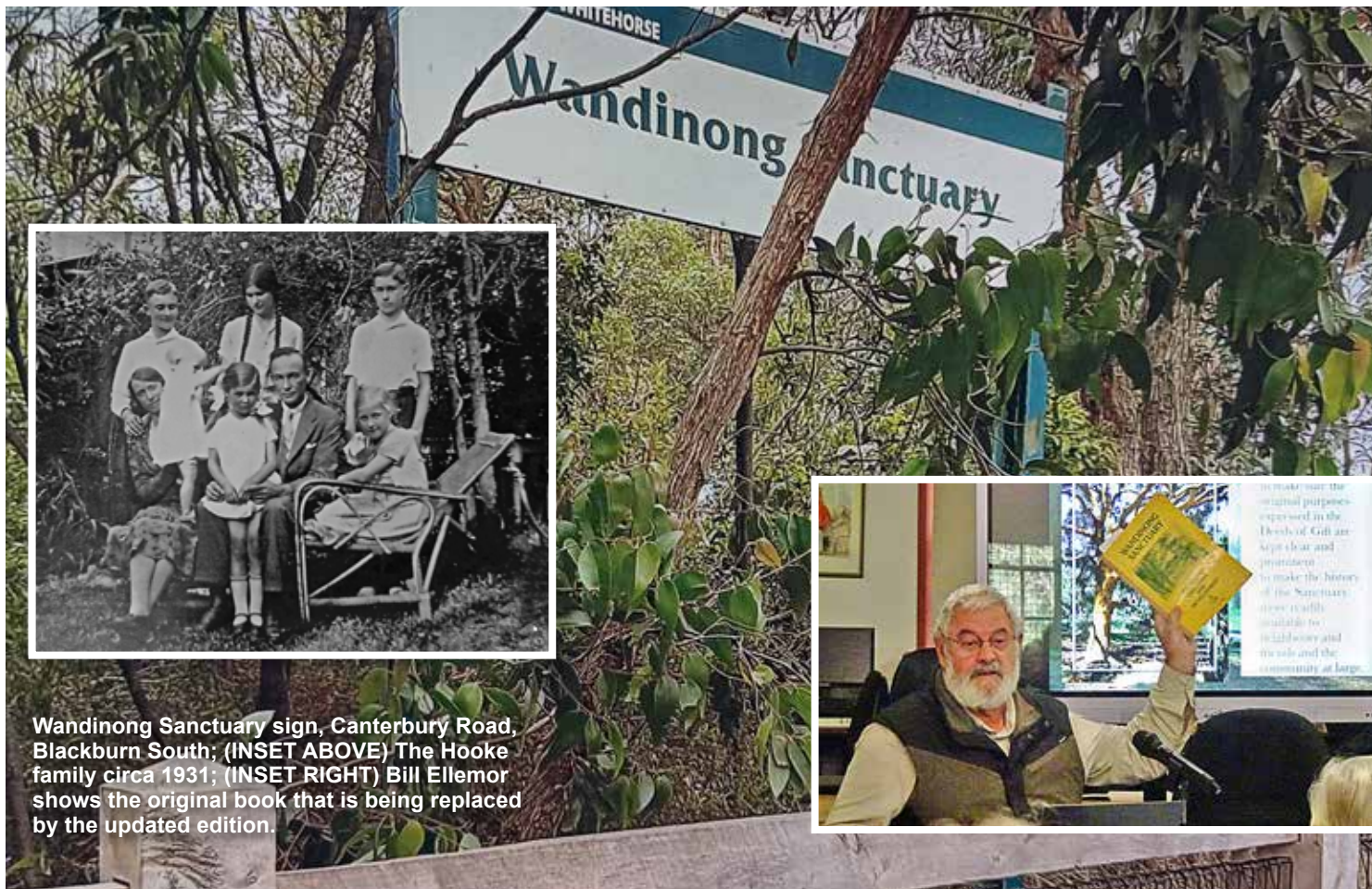
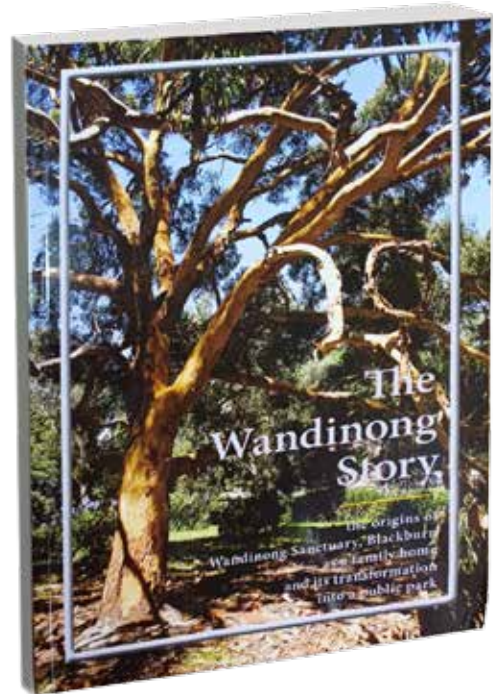
**Y**OU might drive past it a hundred times and not know it is there. Wandinong Sanctuary is a little pocket of bushland, surrounded by South Blackburn suburbia, which was generously donated to the City of Whitehorse in 1973 by Mrs Janet Hooke. She had lived there with her husband Arthur for almost 60 years and gave the land to the community as a bushland sanctuary for passive recreation.

On Saturday 1 June we welcomed Bill Ellemor to speak about Wandinong, and to introduce the book (produced by the Wandinong Sanctuary Advisory Committee), which tells its story.

As David Inglis said in his Foreword for the book:

*The uses of Wandinong by locals and the public are many. Some people take the opportunity to study flora and fauna, whilst others may simply choose to sit in quiet contemplation. Thankfully, all will hope to gain some relief from busy lives.*

Bill's address was received with interest by an appreciative audience that plied him with questions both after the talk and during the afternoon tea.



Wandinong Sanctuary sign, Canterbury Road, Blackburn South; (INSET ABOVE) The Hooke family circa 1931; (INSET RIGHT) Bill Ellemor shows the original book that is being replaced by the updated edition.

# A 'BRILLIANT CAREER': GILLIAN ARMSTRONG



(ABOVE): ND3005 Proud parents Pat and Raleigh Armstrong;  
(BELOW): ND5833 Film director Gillian.



**G**ILLIAN Armstrong credits her parents Raleigh and Patricia Armstrong with fostering her creative talents. Raleigh was a keen amateur photographer, with a darkroom at the rear of his real estate business. Patricia, a primary school teacher, loved musicals and sang tunes around the family home.

Born in Vermont, with an older brother, Ian (who went into the family business), and a younger sister, Sue (who became a costume designer, including for the film *Puberty Blues*, and later a craft artist), Gillian attended Vermont Primary School, then Vermont High School.

Early influences on Gillian were her love of drawing and reading. Gillian described herself as 'the child reading under the bed with the light on'. Among her favourites was *Anne of Green Gables*, as was the film *To Kill a Mocking Bird*, which her father took her to see when she was ten. It left a big impression on her. Creating stories and turning her dolls into the actors in plays was encouraged by her mother: 'a fantastic sewer'. Patricia made the curtains and furnishings for a puppet theatre Raleigh constructed for Gillian in his back shed. Together they made characters out of papier-mache; Gillian would stage performances in the family garage, with sister Sue a willing audience member.

In grade six her teacher, Mr McQuillen, let the class write and perform plays. Recognising Gillian's flair, he advised her mother to encourage and develop her talent. Patricia contacted the Mitcham Repertory Group and despite misgivings at her young age, (eleven or twelve), they introduced Gillian to Daphne Powell, one of the group's founding members who conducted speech and drama classes. For the next seven years, Gillian attended Mitcham Memorial Hall weekly after school, for tuition. Part of this included sitting Trinity College music exams, attending Eisteddfods and playing parts such as Titania and Jane Eyre. According to Gillian, a voice in her ear (the director's?), said: 'You know you're really not that good ... as an actor.'

Nothing daunted, Gillian completed a Diploma of Art and Film at Swinburne Technical College, but with fellow Swinburne graduate, photographer Stuart Campbell, left Melbourne in 1972 for Sydney. Unfortunately the film industry was in a slump and it was hard for a woman to get a foot in the door. Gillian had to support herself by waitressing until finally getting a break as an assistant editor at a commercial production company. Fortunes changed when she was

*Continued on page 9*

## BOX HILL COURT



THURSDAY, JULY 31, 1936.

Before Mr. Meehan, P.M., Messrs. W. H. G. Ellingworth, C. Weir and A. J. Edgoose, Js.P.

### TRAFFIC OFFENCES.

Roy V. Marshall, Elsternwick, was charged with being the owner of a motor truck, which, when examined in Box Hill on 6th May, had no registration label affixed to the windscreen. For the defence it was stated that the piece of glass to which the label was adhering had broken off, and, when the truck was in use, this piece was carried in the driver's cabin. Evidence that the truck had been registered on 12th August 1935, was given by the Elsternwick police. Defendant was fined 10/-.

J. J. Tognazzini, driver of the above truck, appeared on two charges. For failing to produce his driving licence within seven days after being asked by the police, defendant was fined 10/-; for driving a truck which had no proper horn attached, he was fined 30/-.

Alfred Mather, motor truck driver, was also fined 10/- for failure to produce his driving licence to the police within seven days.

William Bourke was fined 10/- for on 8th June not having a tail light sufficiently strong to illuminate the rear number plate on his motor truck.

## STREET BETTING.

John Bain, Mitcham road, Mitcham: Arthur Claude Bate, Cobham road, Mitcham, and William McConville, Albert street, Mitcham, were each fined £20, in default three months imprisonment for having engaged in street betting at Mitcham on 20th June. The first two defendants were ordered to pay 25 forthwith and the balance at the rate of 25 per month: the third was ordered to make an initial payment of £10, and £25 per month.

### UNATTENDED VEHICLE

Phillip Slavin; baker's salesman. of Union road, Surrey Hills, pleaded not guilty to having, on 13th July, left unattended a horse drawn vehicle with no horse attached, on White Horse road, near the corner of Watt Street, Box Hill.

Sergeant C. H. Samblebe, for the prosecution. stated that, when charged, accused had said he was getting the shafts repaired by the coachbuilder outside whose place the vehicle stood. The police wanted the traffic code to be obeyed, and wanted to put a stop to repairs being effected on the street outside premises of this character.

Mr. J. H. Fulton, for the defendant, said the section under which the charge was laid, dated back to about 1860. It had originally been framed to prevent the roads from being blocked by drays, waggons and vehicles of a similar nature. Defendant had had an accident about 100 yards from the coachbuilder's premises, had effected temporary repairs to a broken shaft, and had then driven to the point in question. He submitted that the charge was trivial and that there

was no offence.

From the box, the accused stated that his horse had slipped and fallen, breaking a shaft and some of the harness. He had repaired it sufficiently to allow of the vehicle being driven the short distance to the coachbuilder's. He had arranged with the latter to have another pair of shafts put on until his own could be repaired. To do this, it was necessary to unyoke the horse which, being a nervous animal, he had placed in the yard for safety. The vehicle might have been unattended for about a minute while he did this.

Corroborative evidence was tendered by Mr. W. F. Young, coachbuilder.

After a retirement, Mr. Meehan said the Bench had arrived at no definite conclusion. It felt that although perhaps a technical offence had been committed, it would be a hardship to inflict any penalty on defendant. What the police intended was to prevent people from using the roadway for repairs. In the circumstances, the Bench suggested, the police might withdraw the case.

Sergt. Samblebe agreed, and the case was withdrawn.

Before Mr. Mehan. P.M.

Special damages amounting to £30, with £8/7/- costs, were allowed A. Johns against A. Jackson. The claim arose out of an accident which occurred in October, 1935, at the corner of Burwood and Springvale roads, Blackburn, when several of a party of bowlers proceeding to Blackburn, were injured.

### SITUATIONS WANTED.

WOMAN wants daily work, washing or cleaning. 28 Cook street, Mitcham.

**"Don't look like this.."**

Save fuel and enjoy real comfort. In other words, COOK WITH GAS. Furthermore, a modern Gas Stove will improve the look of your kitchen.

Prices suit the smallest purse. Sizes suit the largest family. Types suit all tastes.



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## Is this where you live?



**(ABOVE):** A postcard of Brian when he was about ten years old. He was a traffic controller.

**(BELOW):** Brian in his military uniform, taken the year he left for Singapore. According to his sister Gladys, it “doesn’t do him justice”.



**B**RIAN STREET, MITCHAM is one of five Mitcham streets named after fallen diggers who grew up in the area and died in World War II. This street is in memory of Private Brian Cox, Australian Army Ordnance Corps, who died in Japan on 15 March 1945, aged 23 years.

Fred Brian Cox (more commonly known to family and friends as Brian) was born in Box Hill on the 12th of July 1921. He was the son of two middle class Roman Catholics, George Bradley Cox and Ann Mary Cox. He had one older sister named Gladys. His father Bradley was a paint and timber merchant who owned a timber mill called ‘Pete and Cox Timber Mill’ which was situated on Whitehorse Road, Mitcham (now the site of the Catholic church).

Brian was a healthy, fun-loving and honourable young man. He was intelligent, with a good sense of humour, and enjoyed nothing more than going fishing and hunting on the weekends. When he was younger he loved to cycle and he won a Victorian Cycling championship. During his younger years Brian attended Blackburn State School and then later Box Hill High School (his name can still be seen today on the honour roll). He graduated with a Merit Certificate and then went on to receive his Junior Technical Certificate. After his schooling he worked as a boiler maker with the railways and then later as an electrical engineer.

On the 25 October 1941, he enlisted at Royal Park for the AIF because he felt it was his duty and he should volunteer. He spent two months training at Bendigo, before he embarked for Singapore. On one of the last days he spent in Bendigo, he had a picnic lunch with his family at a park. He never told his parents that this was going to be the last day they spent with him before he left for Singapore, as he wanted it to be a happy occasion. This was going to be the last time the family ever saw Brian.

The 2/10 Ordnance Corps, including Brian, embarked for Malaya from Sydney on 10 January 1942. The name of the ship is not given in his papers, presumably for security reasons. They docked in Singapore sixteen days later in the midst of the Siege, supposedly to defend the Sembawang Dockyard from a Japanese attack.

The Japanese overran the area and after the Ordnance Corps had landed, Brian was reported

# Remembering Brian

missing. From friends who were over there with him, it was reported to his family that he had been taken to Changi and then on to work on the infamous Death Railway. On 15 January 1945, after possibly spending up to fifteen months working on Burma Railway, Brian was transferred to Kyushu, Japan, to work in the coal mines. This was to be where he spent his last few months.

It is not known exactly what Brian did whilst he stayed at Changi, as his family only ever received two cards from him.

In late 1941, the Japanese decided to construct a railway link across Thailand through the mountainous jungle. For this plan to go ahead they needed labour, and so men from Changi were constantly shipped out of the camp and taken up north to work on the railway. The Burma railway was a place of malnutrition, disease and brutality.

On 18 September 1943, the Japanese announced that the main work was finished. In October, the group of men that included Brian were told they were going to be returned to Changi. Those who had befriended Brian said that his sense of humour had been a great encouragement to them all and this had kept them going whilst they had worked together on the Death Rail.

In 1945 the last force of 600 Australians was sent to Japan. Here the officers mixed up Brian's Service and Casualty forms saying that he was transported to Fukuoka when he was, in fact, one of the 200 men in another group sent by rail to Omuta, one of the largest camps on Kyushu Island, holding about 1,700 British, American, Dutch and Australian prisoners of war. The worst hardship endured by the prisoners in Japan was the bitter cold. In fact, the winter of 1944-45 was the worst experienced in Japan for eighty years. The effect of the cold on the ill-fed and overworked prisoners was such that few men thought they would survive. Brian, like the many others who had been shipped from Malaya, was used to a warm tropical climate and thus in a debilitated physical condition was totally unprepared and unable to cope with the extreme cold of the Japanese winter. On 15 March, just three months after arriving in Japan, he died, like hundreds of others, of pneumonia.

Brian was the only male of his third generation Australian family bearing the name Cox, and when he died the name went with him.

Karyn Berends



(ABOVE): Brian's family first heard of his death from a friend who had returned from the war. This official news did not arrive until some time later.

(BELOW): The laying of a wreath near Brian's plaque in the footpath near the Rangeview shops (NP4216).



The 2024 Annual General Meeting of the Whitehorse Historical Society Inc. will be held at the Visitor Centre, Schwerkolt Cottage & Museum Complex, Deep Creek Road Mitcham commencing at 1.00 pm on Saturday 17 August 2024

**AGENDA**

1. Welcome & Apologies
2. Minutes of Previous Annual General Meeting August 2023
3. Business Arising from previous minutes
4. President’s Report
5. Treasurer’s Report
  - Presentation of Annual Statement
  - Auditor’s Report
  - Appointment of Auditor for 2024–2025
6. Determination of Annual Membership fees
7. General Business
  - Election of Officers and Ordinary Members of the Executive Committee
  - Nominations are called for the positions of:
    - President
    - Vice President
    - Secretary/Public Officer
    - Treasurer
    - Ordinary Members of the Committee (7)
8. Close of Annual General Meeting

**Please advise apologies to Secretary Kathy Innes 9870 9044 or 0409 230 058.**



**Whitehorse Historical Society Inc. AGM 2024  
Nomination Form**

As a financial member of the Whitehorse Historical Society I, \_\_\_\_\_  
Accept nomination for the position of:-

- President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Ordinary Committee Member (7 positions)

Signature

Date

Nominated by:(name) \_\_\_\_\_ Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
(Financial Member of WHS)

**NOTE: Members may self-nominate.**



## 2024 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 7 September**  
**Saturday 2 November**

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

## STATISTICS

Photographs catalogued	-	4558
Artefacts catalogued	-	5484
Documents catalogued	-	8457
Museum visitors May–June 2024	-	435

## DIARY DATES

Meetings are held at the Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex

**Saturday, 17 August**  
**1.00pm Annual General Meeting**  
Valda Arrowsmith OAM:  
*Relaunching the Schwerkolt Cottage book*



## A 'BRILLIANT CAREER': GILLIAN ARMSTRONG

*Continued from page 4*

chosen as one of twelve – from a thousand applicants – to attend a year-long pilot Australian Film and Television School post-graduate course. Provided with funds to produce three professional (play) short films, *100 a Day* earned her critical acclaim and the Australian Film Institute award for Best Photography and Editing. She also won the Best Film Award at the Adelaide Film Festival. Her second film, *The Singer and the Dancer* won an AFI award in 1976 (her first), its success assured by the talents of cinematographer Russell Boyd and actress Ruth Cracknell.

*My Brilliant Career* (1979), her first feature film, cemented her career. It was selected for the prestigious competition in Cannes, was released around the world and gained her seven Australian Film Industry (AFI) awards including Best Film and Best Director. She was the first woman to direct a feature film in Australia in forty years. After many Hollywood offers, to further her career, Gillian moved to the USA in 1984, her first Hollywood experience being *Mrs Soffel* for MGM the same year.

Other notable successes came with *Starstruck*, *High Tide*, *The Last Days of Chez Nous*, *Oscar and Lucinda* (1997); *Little Women* (starring Winona Ryder, 1995), *Charlotte Gray* and *Death-Defying Acts*. Her move into documentary film-making has also attracted praise. Her award-winning four-part feature, *Love Lost and Lies*, commencing in 1975, and *Smokes and Lollies*, which followed the lives of a trio of fourteen-year-old Australian girls, continues to attract praise.

Having had the benefit of influential mentors herself, Gillian's own talents and success have helped launch the careers of Cate Blanchett (*Oscar and Lucinda*), Judy Davis and Sam Neill (*My Brilliant Career*) and Claudia Karvan (*High Tide*).

The young Vermont girl, who staged plays using her dolls in her father's garage, has had a really 'brilliant career'.

© G. Bannister 2021

### Sources :

Ms. Gillian Armstrong for personal recollections and corrections.  
WHS Archives ND 3005, 5833, 5911, 6163, 7024 for the following documents:-  
*Nunawading Gazette* 4 May 1977  
*Whitehorse Gazette* 14 June 2000  
*The Age Green Guide* 18 June 1998  
*The Age* 3 August 1996  
*Whitehorse Leader* 19 February 2003  
Newspaper Article? – 9 March 2008  
*Good Weekend* 8 March 2008  
*Sunday Life* 23 May 2010  
*The Weekly Review* 19 August 2015  
ABC Classic FM: Margaret Throsby interviewing Gillian Armstrong; first aired 2010; replayed Monday 10 May 2021.

## WHS Committee Contacts

### President

Vicki Jones-Evans  
0404 612 216

### Vice-President

Peter McPhee

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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

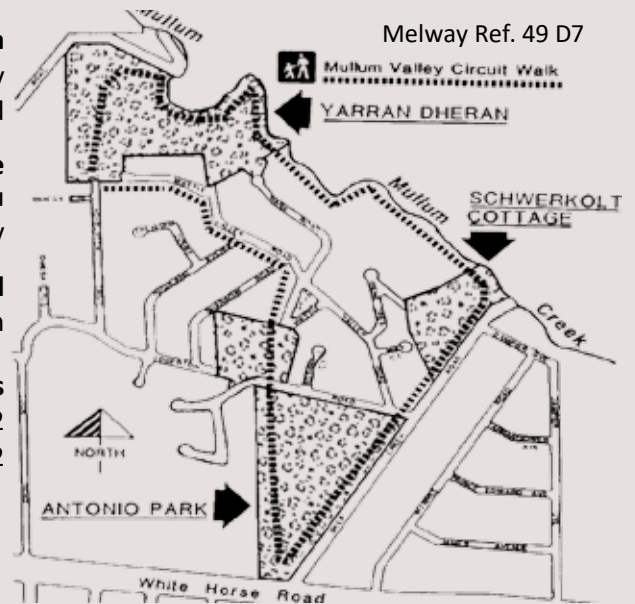
whitehorsehistory.org.au  
facebook.com/whitehorsehistory

### Email

whitehorsehistory@hotmail.com

### Postal Address

PO Box 2092  
Rangeview 3132



**Copy Deadline for next WHS Newsletter: Wednesday, 4 September 2024**



## 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."*

*"Whitehorse Historical Society acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. Wurundjeri connection to this land dates back more than 40,000 years, and evidence of this connection still exists today."*



**The Whitehorse Historical Society, Inc. acknowledges the support of the Whitehorse City Council.**

### REMEMBER

**Whitehorse Historical Society**

**Local History Collection**

Open 10am to 3pm Wednesdays.

Visitors welcome.

Ring 9873 4946 for an appointment at other times.



**WHITEHORSE  
CITY COUNCIL**



*Printing provided by* **MICHAEL SUKKAR MP FEDERAL MEMBER FOR DEAKIN**

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