



# NEWSLETTER

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1965-2025 Sixty years of local history

## Family Heritage Day

IT was a fabulous day despite the wind, with around 1000 visitors enjoying the activities on offer.

Our new attraction, Animals of Oz, had large crowds for the entire day, and another hit was the activities provided by Basket Makers of Victoria, who provided three activity options for children (and, in some cases, adults). To see the pride on the faces as they held up their special Dream Catcher or God's Eye was a delight to see.

Our wonderful community groups made the day educational as well as enjoyable, and their continued support was much appreciated. The Lions of Blackburn and the Rotary Club of Mitcham provided a never-ending supply of sausages to the hungry visitors. The Society's cake stall sold all the delicious goodies and our Devonshire Tea was well supported.

As usual, the giant bubble artist kept crowds entertained in the Cottage garden, where old fashioned games and picnic races were also held.

Gunther the blacksmith worked tirelessly all day and Brumbies Bush Band provided great music.

As Heritage Family Day is our only fundraiser each year we are delighted with the results.

*Kathy Innes*

*\*See more pictures from Heritage Day on page 6.*



**NEXT  
MEETING:**

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

*Nick McGowan MP:*

*Life Before Politics*





## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

*Dear Members,*

THE same Committee is serving you this year as last after a smooth election at the AGM conducted by Cr Ben Stennett. Anne Payne gave an excellent talk on the History of Blackburn Lake, which was followed by lots of chat over afternoon tea.

Our very full calendar of events has seen the collaborative Thomas Cook Boot & Clothing Company Display installed in the Museum and Visitor Centre. There is also an excellent short film showing in the Visitor Centre on how Thomas Cook came to form the Company.

The Wedding Dresses exhibition has been installed and officially opened by the Mayor, Cr Andrew Davenport. This collaborative exhibition features art pieces from the Whitehorse Art Collection, along with twelve wedding dresses from our Collection.

Thank you to Kathy and Harley for organising Heritage Family Day, and to all the members and their families that helped out on the day. We are grateful for all the Community groups that provide all the interesting activities and displays that help to make the event such a special day. Thank you also to Whitehorse City Council Events and Arts staff for their help and collaboration.

The Whitehorse City Council Community Grant provided our paid entertainment, which included a new attraction, Animals of Oz, which was a great hit.

See you at the next meeting to hear Nick McGowan MP on his interesting talk on life before politics.

*Vicki Jones-Evans*

Whitehorse Artspace  
and  
Whitehorse Historical Society  
present

### FINDING THE ONE: Wedding dresses from Whitehorse



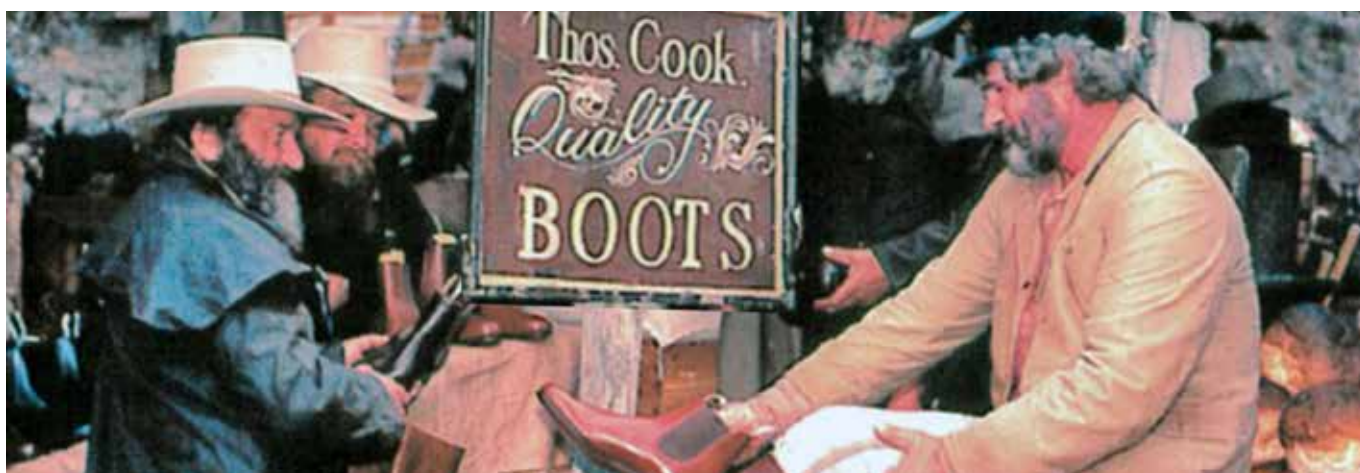
Wedding dresses preserved by the Whitehorse Historical Society tell stories of yesteryear, set against key landscapes from the Whitehorse Art Collection that evoke time and place.

**Exhibition Celebration and Floortalk:**  
Saturday 20 September 1pm – 3pm  
(talk begins at 2pm).

RSVP to [artspace@whitehorse.vic.gov.au](mailto:artspace@whitehorse.vic.gov.au) by Thursday 18 September.

**13 September – 25 October**  
Artspace, Box Hill Town Hall  
Free Admission





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# AUGUST MEETING REPORT

## A History of Blackburn Lake Sanctuary



WE were privileged to have Anne Payne OAM as speaker at this year's AGM. While we all 'know' of Blackburn Lake, many of us do not know a great deal about its history.

We heard the origins of the lake: that in 1889 it was part of a speculative land syndicate, 'made' to enhance land values and provide a water reservoir for local orchardists. We learnt about the creative sidelines of The Freehold Investment and Banking Company. How a refreshment room, jetty and for-hire rowing boats were added with the aim of attracting people from the inner parts of Melbourne, encouraging them to take a picnic excursion to Blackburn via steam train.

Around this time Fredrick McCubbin lived in the area, painting *Down on His Luck* and *The Bush Burial* with glimpses of Blackburn Lake illustrated on his canvasses. McCubbin preferred the more wooded landscape of the Blackburn area to the open vistas favoured by his contemporary Heidelberg School artists.

The area was envisaged as centrepiece of a model township during the boom years of the 1880s. As it happened, the bubble burst in the 1890s with the bankruptcy of the Freehold Investment and Banking Company.

In 1909 the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society (now Victorian Adult Deaf Society) purchased seventy-five acres of land, including the lake. They built a substantial residential home in Central Road, cleared the land, and cultivated a flower farm. The property was known as Lake Park, a place for the "aged, infirm and feeble-minded deaf mutes" to live and work in.

During and after the years for the first World War gatherings of wounded soldiers were frequently brought to the lake for picnics, as part of their recuperation.

In 1921, following a High Court decision, commercial flower sales ceased, as it was deemed a charity organisation could not earn money, and would consequently be liable to pay municipal rates! As the lake was owned by the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society, its immediate surrounds were protected from development for many years after the society ceased to use the property as a flower farm.

By 1938, The Blackburn Progress Association was keen to acquire the lake and surrounding land for development as a public reserve. The government of the day promised to assist with "improvements, construction of baths, etc." While ownership of the entire 75-acre site remained in the hands of the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society, the area continued to be popular with the public.



The Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Planning Scheme eventually rezoned the area around the lake as public open space, but it was still owned by the Adult Deaf and Dumb Society.

In 1962, The MMBW decided to deepen the lake to stop flash flooding. This would have destroyed the 'natural' lake concept. Many local conservationists urged the Nunawading Council to discuss an alternative plan. The council invited Edna Walling and Ellis Stones "to give an opinion on the lake's potential." Both ranked the lake area with the Botanical Gardens of Melbourne. Council accepted their findings, and a plan was developed to build a retaining wall and outlet at the southern end of the lake. It would to be constructed in such a manner that the vegetation surrounding the lake's edge would not be destroyed.

The 1960s was a sad time for Blackburn Lake. Inappropriate use, illegal rubbish dumping, neglect harmed its fragile environment. Anne took us through the reclamation process and reimagining of the lake as we know it today. The Visitor Centre was extended to accommodate the expanding Education Program. Local Rotary Clubs, State Government and Council were all contributors, and remain closely involved to this day.

Thank you, Anne, for sharing your vast and long knowledge of Blackburn Lake – a true Sanctuary for all the community – with us. A shout out for the Advisory Committee and their ongoing tireless work keeping and advancing this special local place.

Margaret Graham

WHS Newsletter



# Finding the One



A wedding dress display sounded like a simple straightforward idea. After talks on and off for ten years with the Jacquie Nicholls-Reeves, Curator of the Whitehorse Art Space, we finally had a definite date with Marguerite Brown, her successor.

On the 6 May 2024 we had photographed the 29 wedding dresses in our Collection. On the 5 of March this year we sent Marguerite and Kerriane Stone, Arts & Culture Officer, copies to choose from.

Marguerite's idea was to match the dresses with artworks from the Whitehorse Art Collection. She selected twelve dresses from the Whitehorse area, named the exhibition Finding the One: Wedding dresses from Whitehorse and chose the artworks.

We had twelve dresses and at least fifteen mannequins. That sounds so simple until you realise that lady's sizes are varied and mannequin sizes are fairly limited. The dresses spanned one hundred years. The 1871 and 1886 dresses were tiny and we didn't have a mannequin to match. We bought a modern mannequin the size of a 5-6 year-old child. It fitted the 1938 dress.

We bought polystyrene in round cake shapes and Emily started work, glueing them together and then using a hot wire to sculpt them into shape. After Emily's three months' work we had two torso mannequins for the dresses, Lucy and Marian. Harley and Bob then helped with stands for the torsos to sit on. We are now on first name basis with the dresses. 1938 is Doris.

With much trying on of dresses on this and then that mannequin, Patty, Emily and I finally arrived at the best match. We had found our "Ones".

We then needed to fine tune the fittings with padding out, and finding petticoats to fit. In the meantime, we purchased a dress steamer to prepare the dresses after they had lain in boxes.

On the fifth of September the boxes of wedding dresses and mannequins were picked up and taken to the Artspace. Patty, Emily and I headed down to the Artspace the following week to prepare our ladies for display. After two full days at the Artspace we had an exhibition.

The exhibition was officially opened by the Mayor, Cr Andrew Davenport, on Saturday, 20 September. So please go along and meet Lucy, Marian, Mary, Rosalie, Sharlene, Meredith, Molly, Dorothy, Edith, Doris, Dianne and Ida.

*Vicki Jones-Evans*

# From THE REPORTER

Issued in conjunction with the "Hawthorn and Camberwell Citizen"  
THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SHIRES OF MUNAWADING, DONCASTER, AND CIRCULATING IN THE CITIES OF CAMBERWELL, HAWTHORN & K.E.W. SHIRES OF MUNAWADING, DONCASTER, FERN TREE GULLY, LILLYDALE AND ADJOINING MUNICIPALITIES.

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 5, 1923

PRICE: TWOPENCE

## DEAL IN DAIRY FARM.

### CONTRACT SET ASIDE.

In the First Civil Court on Tuesday Mr. Justice Mann set aside a contract for the sale of a dairy farm at Lilydale, which was bought for £5 an acre in 1921 and resold within a few months at £25 an acre - a difference of £3000.

The action was brought by R. G. Smith, 21 years of age, against W. J. Brown. The claim was one involving alleged misrepresentation by which Smith had entered into a contract to purchase a farm in the Lilydale district from Brown.

In his judgment, Mr. Justice Mann accepted Smith's evidence as regards the alleged misrepresentation. The property, he said, had been advertised as first-class, and Smith had not troubled himself to verify the accuracy of the description.

His Honor set aside the purchase contract, and ordered that the £750 paid by Smith be refunded. He allowed Brown the benefit of £130 collected by Smith as income from the property, and also £40 in respect to the growing crop which was on the land when Smith took over occupation. Smith was awarded £170 in respect to compensation.

### DAIRYMAN FINED £10.

At the Kew Court this week, Leslie Collier, dairyman, of Surrey Hills, was charged with having worked a horse in circumstances involving cruelty, and also with having permitted the horse to be driven by an employee while the animal was unfit for work. He was fined £5 on each charge, in default one month's imprisonment, with £33/ costs.

Mr. J. H. Woolcock, J.P., in giving the justices' decision, remarked that it was a very serious case, and it was the duty of the bench to see that animals were protected.

Sergeant Neill stated that on September 13 he visited a dairy at Surrey Hills and found defendant driving a cream colored horse which had a raw sore on its shoulder. He had never seen a filthier state of things.

## EXTENSION OF ELECTRIC SERVICE.

### TO BE SUBMITTED TO STANDING COMMITTEE.

A deputation, representative of the Lilydale district, waited upon the Minister of Railways last week, the main object being to urge the electrification of the railway from Ringwood to Lilydale as soon as the authority is given. It is felt in Lilydale that there is not the slightest chance of an improved railway service until electrified. Other matters, such as an additional train to Lilydale during the afternoon, and the restoration of the 5.20 p.m. train were brought under the notice of the Minister. The deputation was introduced by Mr. W. H. Everard, M.L.A., and was supported by the Hons. Chandler and Tyner, M's.L.C.

In introducing the deputation, Mr. Everard said the object of the deputation was to get the Minister to push on with the scheme of electrifying the line from Ringwood to Lilydale and Fern Tree Gully. The electrification of these sections was favored by the Commissioners, and the deputation now wanted the Minister to get the bill passed through Parliament, so that it could be dealt with by the Railways Standing Committee.

Cr. Paul, president of the Lilydale Council, and Crs. McGhee, Hughes and Hamill referred to the present inadequate train service.

The Minister said he recognised the disabilities under which the people labored, and they had his sympathy. The Railway Commissioners favorably entertained the proposition. He would have the extension of the electric service placed on the list, and then it would have to run the gauntlet when it came before the Standing Committee for approval. As regarded the restoration of the 5.20 p.m. train from Lilydale, this would be altered when the summer timetable came into force in November, when an extra train would be run, and he hoped that it would be well supported. If it were, then it would be retained.

## Construction of Roads.

Northcote Council carried a motion to consider in committee the advisability of floating a loan for the wood-blocking of High street, or at least a portion of it. It has long been potent to all that the present system of road construction is not equal to the strain at present put upon it, and that something more enduring than macadam will have to be resorted to if these progressive suburbs are to have the decent roads they are entitled to. If America can build such roads by the thousand-mile stretch, surely a few miles of them is not beyond the reach of Melbourne suburbs.

### Burwood Road Tram.

Auburn Progress Association requested the Hawthorn Council Wednesday evening to urge on the Tramway Board to have a tramway along Burwood road constructed. Cr. Chalmers pointed out that at the previous meeting Cr. Rigby and himself had been appointed to wait upon the chairman of the Board, and find out the exact position. When an opportunity presented itself the interview would take place. It was decided to notify the association to this effect, and also to point out the procedure that must be followed before the Board would have power to have the tramway constructed. It was mentioned that the council had never missed an opportunity of advancing the claims of Burwood road to consideration in this matter.

### New Postal Rates.

Pre-war conditions as regards postal rates are now in operation. Postage on letters on Monday was reduced to 1d. within the Commonwealth and to all parts of the British Empire. The same charge will be made for letter cards, and post card postage will be reduced to 1d. For each newspaper up to 10oz. the charge will be 1d. for within the Commonwealth, and to New Zealand and Fiji and to the United Kingdom 1d. for 4oz.; up to 10oz., 1d.



# Family Heritage Day Through the lens



Schwerdt  
Cottage & Museum





# The Story of Poultry

## Part Two: The local industry

BELOW: ND3647 A page from the Victorian Poultry Journal of 1 July, 1932, illustrating incubators and hatching available at the time.

IN the early 1930s there was reported to be nineteen poultry farmers in Forest Hill, Nunawading and Vermont, while in the vicinity of Blackburn Road there were some smaller farms of 500 to 1,000 birds. By 1946 the total number of birds in the Parish of Nunawading had risen to 142,823 birds.

T.H. (Harry) Pettigrove was a poultry breeder and an egg producer with a hatchery in Fulton Road, South Blackburn. His father had had a poultry farm and hatchery in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. At this time the usual poultry farm was approximately five acres in size and organised on a family basis with about 1000 to 1500 birds. This was as much as one man could handle to make a comfortable living.

Mr Pettigrove senior was one of the first to take on chicken sexing, which was introduced in 1934 from Japan, where it had begun in 1931. By 1935 he was sexing the chickens on his own farm and at other local hatcheries. A fee of 'so much per 100' was charged. The Australian hatching season was from June to October, and in 1937, and again in 1938, as soon as the local season ended he went to England to gain additional experience on their poultry farms. As he said in his *Notes on the Poultry Industry* (ND3555):

The breeds most commonly used were White Leghorns and Australorps, which were black hens. The white birds by genetic breeding did not become

clucky, and could not be used to hatch eggs, whereas the black ones did become broody and could be used successfully for hatching. It was found that a cross of the two breeds gave better egg-laying capacity, but the characteristic of broodiness varied depending upon the manner of crossing. A black cock and a white hen would have offspring showing one set of characteristics; while a white cock and a black hen had a different set. Genetic strains also varied showing the prominence of one breed over the other in some birds. Prior to 1930 hatching had been done on individual farms using; if there were no broody hens, small incubators were warmed by kerosene or similar burners. This was followed by the first commercial type heated by piped hot water fed from a coke heater. Then, in about 1930 or 1931, incubators heated by electricity were introduced, these could cater for thousands of eggs at a time. It was this type of incubator that made commercial hatching practicable.

The earliest commercial breeders had very large markets and sent chickens to all parts of the state. Day-old chickens are able to survive a day or two without food; therefore, it was possible to send them long distances by rail provided they were dispatched promptly and collected immediately upon arrival.

(Continued on page 8)

### Modern Poultry Equipment

When thinking of Poultry Equipment, remember the V. Black & Co. supply the most modern appliances at the Lowest Prices. As ventilation is essential to brooders, we inspect the new season's lines, all ready for approaching requirements. A specialty is made of Brooding Equipment, every type of Single or Battery Brooder being supplied. Also the Light of New Frontier Your Brooder Plant probably needs overhauling.



**BLACK'S THREE-TUBE BROODER PLANT**—This equipment gives excellent results, and every year is sold. Large brooder, strong, durable construction. Every single brooder with 3 tubes, 3000 lbs. capacity. Also 2 tubes, 1500 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 750 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 375 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 187 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 93 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 46 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 23 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 11 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 5 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 2 lbs. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/2 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/4 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/8 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/16 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/32 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/64 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/128 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/256 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/512 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/1024 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/2048 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/4096 lb. capacity. Also 1 tube, 1/8192 lb. capacity. 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## The Story of Poultry Continued

A letter dated 1996 was written by one Charles Overman. In it he explains in great detail the process of starting out in life as a poultry farmer. His story covers the period from 1928 to 1949 when he sold the business.

He wrote that he purchased several acres in Vernal Avenue, which was a track off Mitcham Road. It took ten years living alone before he could afford to build a house.

Gradually the necessary sheds were built for laying pens, and brooders for rearing chickens. Next came a brooder pen for rearing chickens. This was heated by a briquette boiler from which water-filled pipes ran through-out the building. In the winter the briquette boiler required stoking at 3am; if not, dozens of chickens would have died.

In the room where eggs were cleaned and packed, a shaft operated by a ½ horsepower motor was rigged up. This machine was fitted with cloth buffs that enabled eggs to be cleaned without washing – an egg is covered with a film when laid and, if washed, bacteria can cause damage and washed eggs were unsuitable for export.

The secret of obtaining clean eggs was to have efficient nests. These he obtained by constructing six feet of covered nests with an entrance each end, and on the bottom a good supply of rice husks. As a result, a large percentage of the eggs required no cleaning. Those that did, the buff took off any dirt very quickly.

A dry mix of feed was before the birds all the time. The basic ingredients were bran, pollard and meat-meal, wheat and maize were added together with cod liver oil. They also received a wet mash and chaff mix in the mornings and in the afternoons, wheat. Other crops sown for green feed were oats, maize, rape seed/canola, millet, potatoes, peas, beans and lucerne.

A district poultry farmers' organisation covering Ringwood, Croydon, Vermont & Bayswater was formed. Overman joined and became president. A movement was also on foot to establish an Egg Marketing Board. Later, in 1946, the Egg Board and Egg Pulp Board came into being and ran it until 1954.

By 1949 it was clear the area was becoming residential and a decision was made to sell. In May 1950 the Overman family moved to Perth.

Charles Overman died in April 1995 age 95.

*Yvonne Fitzmaurice*

## 50 Years of Community Impact



ESTABLISHED in 1975, Nunawading Toy Library (NTL) began as a small initiative operating out of a private home, with a handful of donated toys and a clear mission: to provide high-quality educational resources that promote learning through play. Over the decades, NTL has experienced substantial growth in membership, toy inventory, and operational capacity.

The library relocated several times before settling in 2009 into its current premises at 19 Norma Road, Forest Hill. Throughout its journey, NTL has benefitted from local grants and embraced creative fundraising efforts, including sausage sizzles, raffles, and market stalls. Its promotional strategies evolved from word-of-mouth to active participation in community festivals and the development of a professional website.

Operational enhancements have included the introduction of toy cataloguing with photographs, implementation of computer systems, and extended opening hours. As of 2025, NTL proudly serves over 200 members and offers access to more than 3,000 toys, continuing to fulfil its founding mission as a vital community resource.

In celebration of its 50th anniversary, NTL invites anyone with memories or stories of the library to contribute to a commemorative timeline and historical summary. Submissions can be sent to [info@nunawadingtoylibrary.org.au](mailto:info@nunawadingtoylibrary.org.au)



## 2025 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 1 November***

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

## STATISTICS

Photographs catalogued	-	4600
Artefacts catalogued	-	5775
Documents catalogued	-	8538
Museum visitors July–August 2025	-	697

## DIARY DATES

Meetings are held at the Schwerkolt Cottage and  
Museum Complex

**Saturday, 4 October**

**1.00pm General Meeting**

*Nick McGowan MP:*

*Life Before Politics*

**Saturday, 18 October 2pm – 3pm**

*Thomas Cook Exhibition – viewing and afternoon tea*

*Cost: \$5*

**Saturday, 22 November 2pm**

*WHS 60th Anniversary Celebration*

**\*NO DECEMBER MEETING**

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**At Artspace, Box Hill Town Hall**

**Saturday, 13 September – Saturday, 25 October**

**Tues – Fri 10am – 4 pm; Sat 12 – 4 pm.**

*FINDING THE ONE: Wedding dresses from Whitehorse*

*Free Admission*

**Friday 10 October 10:30am – 12 noon**

*Floortalk: FINDING THE ONE: Wedding Dresses*

*Free Admission*

# The Meaning of Life!



**Do you enjoy your membership of WHS?**

**We encourage you to think about recommending membership to your friends.**

<https://whitehorsehistory.org.au/membership/>



## WHS Committee Contacts

### President

Vicki Jones-Evans  
0404 612 216

### 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  
Rosalie Whalen

### WHS website

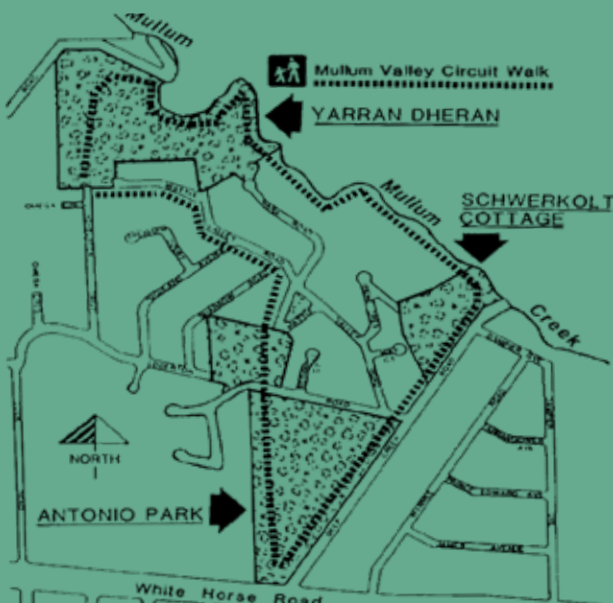
whitehorsehistory.org.au  
facebook.com/whitehorsehistory

### Email

whitehorsehistory@hotmail.com

### Postal Address

PO Box 2092  
Rangeview 3132



## 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**



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