



NEWSLETTER

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Bringing local history to you

“History” on the move

QUITE a while ago WHS volunteer Margaret brought in an item to add to the collection, with a copy of emails that, in museum parlance, serve to provide “provenance”. These emails are presented here, along with pictures of the item.

To: cmc@port-royal.navy.mil

Greetings from Melbourne, Australia

We have just spent the past weekend camping at Wilsons Promontory National Park, southernmost point on the Australian mainland.

Picked up a piece of jetsam on the beach, a coffee mug from the Port Royal with the name of "OS1 DRISCOLL" attached.

Thought he/she may be interested to know the mug is still in usable condition and we would be interested to know where it was lost, as the ship doesn't appear to have been in southern waters recently.

Regards

Maggie Graham



RE: Coffee mug from USS Port Royal

Maggie

Aloha and great to hear from you. Actually, we just left Melbourne about two weeks ago. I have no idea how that mug ended up on the beach and the sailor it belongs to wasn't in Melbourne with us because we had to fly him back for a medical emergency that developed with his baby daughter (she is doing fine now).

My only guess (if it's one of our porcelain mugs, which are heavy and would sink to the bottom if lost at sea) is that one of our sailors must have "borrowed" it to use on the beach and had so much fun that he left it! If it's one of our lighter-weight models then perhaps it blew over the side while traversing some of the bad weather we experienced on the way into Melbourne.

Feel free to keep the mug if it's still in serviceable condition and you want it. We have no need for it here. Thanks for telling me about it. Once I had a South African man find a hat on a beach in Southern Africa that was from us. He emailed me and let me know. That was an interesting one! He found it about two years ago and it's been at least five or six years since we've been in that neck of the woods.

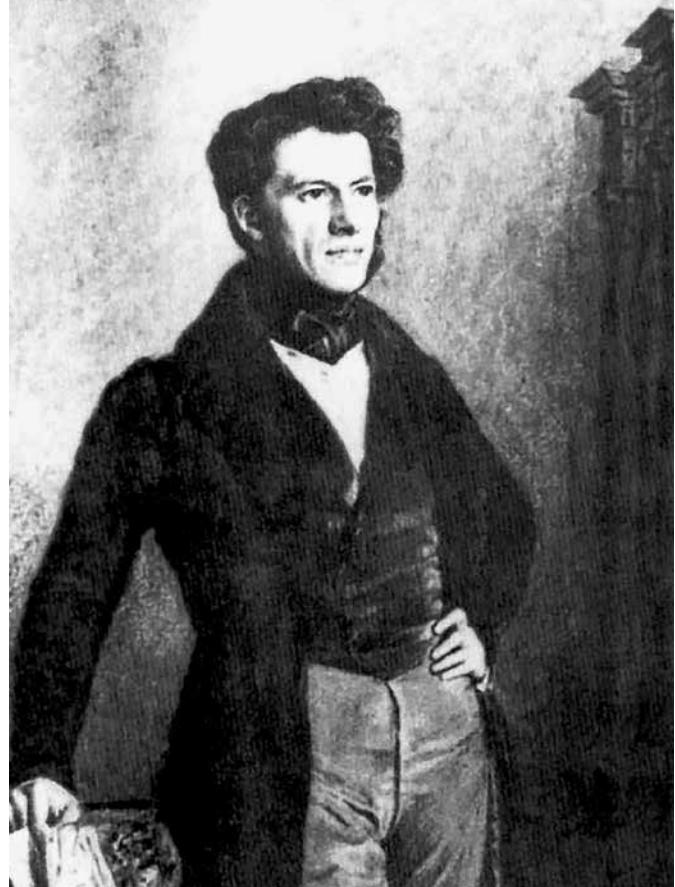
Very Respectfully
Mark



**NEXT
MEETING:**

Saturday, 7 February 1pm
Anne Heywood: Living on Heatherdale Road
No meeting if a Total Fire Ban

The story of



IT is to Governor Charles La Trobe (left) that Victorians owe the legacy of the Yan Yean reservoir. This important water supply was the forerunner of the O'Shannassey Scheme, which forms part of Mitcham's water supply system. La Trobe had heeded the advice in 1851 of the Melbourne city surveyor, Mr James Blackburn, to plan a water supply sufficient to meet the needs of the expanding city and outlying areas.

A 3.1 gigalitre (680,000,000 gallons) reservoir was built across the O'Shannassey River, which rises in the hills 80 kilometres east of Melbourne. Early reservoirs had to be situated at a sufficient height to allow gravity flow, and it was by this means that water from the O'Shannassey River flowed into the Silvan Reservoir and from there to a system of other gravity-fed reservoirs situated across the eastern suburbs of Melbourne. The O'Shannassey Reservoir construction began in 1922, finally reaching completion in 1928. The geography of the Melbourne area, with ground levels falling relatively evenly from 450 feet on the city outskirts to sea level at Bayside areas, allowed for an even water pressure in water mains. The reservoirs then provide a means of pressure relief as well as local



(ABOVE): Construction site and (BELOW) workers, photographed in 1923.



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From *The Reporter*, 1901

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Mitcham Reservoir

water storage for emergencies and their large size allowed sediment to settle. A system of stainless steel mesh screens at the reservoir outlets further filtered the water, providing a clean water supply. The Mitcham Reservoir was one of the largest in the network with a capacity of 43.00 million gallons, situated at 540 feet above sea level.

In October 1909 Healesville Shire Council handed over control of the O'Shannassey River to the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW). In the same month the MMBW purchased ten acres of land from Nunawading Shire Council for £900. This parcel of land, once known as Walker's Park, was to form part of the Mitcham Reservoir. The formation of the Mitcham Progress Association in 1912 provided impetus to obtaining a good water supply for Mitcham. Councillor Morton, speaking at the founding meeting, referred back to 1887, when Nunawading Council had made its first efforts to obtain a consistent water supply. The Board of Land had stymied these efforts, deeming water supply to the Box Hill/Surrey Hills area to be an impossibility. Repeated lobbying by the Council had convinced the Board of Land that Surrey Hills could be supplied from the Yan Yean Reservoir.

Progress was not without controversy. E.E. Walker, of Australian Tessellated Tile Company (ATTC), disputed with the MMBW over the compulsory acquisition of land and the sums offered by way of compensation. ATTC made a claim of £29,925 for 21 acres, 1 rood and 12 perches of land. Its claim was based on the value of clay deposits on the site, on land owned by the ATTC adjoining the site and on necessary alterations to plant and increased costs in working the clay deposits. The MMBW made a further offer of £115 per acre for land purchase and compensation for all ATTC's claims. The threat of arbitration was avoided when the MMBW altered the boundaries of the land it would require and ATTC came to agreement over the sale price.

In 1921 the MMBW invited tenders for the construction of the Mitcham Reservoir. The reservoir was to be 70% larger than any existing reservoir at that time. Its aim was to be a back up supply for the eastern suburbs in times of extreme hot weather consumption, and to supply the service reservoir at Notting Hill, which had previously been supplied from Surrey Hills reservoir. Construction began in 1921 using horse-drawn drays and scoops on the site bounded by the west side of Mitcham Road, and with frontages to Agra and Lucknow Streets. Councillor Ray Meagher, Mayor of Nunawading 1976-77, and a one-time Nunawading Commissioner on the MMBW, had a personal

connection to the reservoir's construction – his father, Bill, paternal grandfather, Jim, and his great-uncle, Paddy, all having worked on its construction. Another early local resident noted that the MMBW brought men out from 'Malty' (Malta) to build the reservoir, the workers being accommodated in a camp near the railway line. A further tender was put out in 1924 by the MMBW for the construction of a caretaker's quarters, Mr Harper being the successful contractor. The reservoir was filled for the first time in December 1923.

In 1935 the reservoir was drained to allow excavation work for the construction of a new water main. Mechanical diggers had replaced the horse-drawn power of the initial construction. The three inches of silt found in the bottom of the reservoir was deemed testament to the purity of the water supply. Closing the three inlets to the reservoir, the water was used until the reservoir was almost empty, the final volume being emptied into neighbouring creeks.

By 1969, the MMBW had decided the growth of the eastern suburbs necessitated the construction of a district depot. At a cost of \$1.57 million, on 23 acres adjacent to the reservoir, a complex of buildings was constructed. The depot was needed for decentralisation of stores, to reduce transport costs, improve efficiency and allow for closer control. Also in the 1960s, the MMBW began roofing its reservoirs to enhance cleanliness of the water; air pollution, animals and birds had been contaminating the supply. Mr John Wilkes, MMBW designer and construction engineer, supervised the covering of Mitcham Reservoir. Again, the reservoir had to be drained, a process taking two days. The base was then cleaned and repair work carried out. A superstructure of 430 upright steel columns, weighing 930 tonnes was constructed. This was then covered with aluminium sheeting, sufficient to roof the four-hectare surface. Ventilation was maintained by leaving gaps of approximately one metre between the new roof and existing walls. On being refilled, the reservoir capacity was sufficient to supply 175,000 homes in the catchment area.



Digging the new water main in 1926.



Veronica at the time of her graduation from the University of Melbourne 1934.
Photo: from Seton-Williams (1988: 88).

Marjorie Veronica Williams was born at Prahran on 20 April 1910 to Seton Gordon Nixon Williams and Eliza Marie Staughton. Seton Williams was a solicitor and lawyer; for twenty years a partner with Mr F.N. Heathfields in the legal firm, Seton Williams & Heathfield. A keen sportsman, he was known in sporting circles as a huntsman, golfer and shooter. He married Eliza Staughton, the daughter of Samuel Staughton M.L.A on 27 May 1896. Marjorie was their only child.

Marjorie – always known as Veronica – noted that: *'I was not a satisfactory child from my parent's point of view. They were sociable and enjoyed entertaining, while I hated parties, pretty clothes and people. I preferred old clothes, animals and solitude...'*

'My father would have preferred a boy. He gave me a rifle for my twelfth birthday and taught me to shoot. He also wanted me taught boxing but desisted at my mother's request, so we settled for judo, which has proved useful to me several times since...'

'...I was always reading...this habit of mine was not well thought of as it was considered I should have been doing something useful...'

'...During the First World War I saw little of my parents. My father was at his office every day and my mother was employed in various patriotic duties for the French Red Cross for several days a week and some voluntary cooking service on another two...'

Veronica was educated at home from 1916 until 1925, by a series of governesses. Most were unsatisfactory, bar one whom Veronica described: *'...In 1916 Mademoiselle Benoit arrived to deal with my education. She was a*

Veronica Seton-Williams a short biography

Bordelaise... a musician, and from her I obtained a certain fluency in the French language...She had not a word of English so that all communication had...to be held in her language and after less than two years she left us to return home, to our great regret. However, my education did not proceed apace. During the next two years there seemed to be a procession on people who tried without much success to teach me the rudiments of learning...'

In 1925, Veronica was sent to board at Clyde Girls Grammar School. *'Throughout my school life I had to work very hard as my earlier irregular schooling had left me with many gaps...I suffered from a level of word blindness...I could not spell, and so had to learn difficult words by heart...My mathematics were poor...I sat my Intermediate Arithmetic examination thirteen times...I had to work very hard because though I had a good memory, I was neither clever or original...'*

Despite all these challenges, Veronica graduated from the University of Melbourne in 1934 with a Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in History and Political Science. Her career had its germination at the age of seven, Veronica remembered: *'...It was as I worked through the books in the house that I came on...a small green history of Egypt...I decided then and there to become an Egyptologist...I must go to Egypt and do some study...'*

At graduation, Veronica moved to England to study under Mortimer Williams at the Institute of Archaeology, University College of London. Ironically, the girl who hated parties and pretty dresses had to endure numerous parties, floral bouquets, pretty dresses and the presence of society in her honour prior to her embarkation on the Ormonde on 29 May 1934 bound for her new life in England.

Persuaded that there was no future in Egyptology, Veronica was encouraged to read British Pre-history. Simultaneously she participated in archaeological digs at Maiden Castle, Dorset with Mortimer Wheeler from 1934-1936. During 1935-1936, she worked on the Sinai Peninsula, excavating Sheik-es-Zuweil with Flinders Petrie. She joined John Garstang on excavations in Palestine and Turkey in 1936-1937 and in 1937-1938 at Tell el-Duweir. Garstang had been the recipient of funds from Walter Beasley, Melbourne business man and founder of the Australian Institute of Archaeology, and who had visited the dig in 1935. In turn, Garstang provided artefacts from the 1936 Jericho dig to Beasley for the Institute. It is not known whether there was any association between Beasley and Veronica. [As an aside, in a curious interlinking of associations, this writer's mother worked as an illustrator

(Continued on page 6)

OPEN COLUMN.

—:—

[Whilst welcoming communications from all who consider they have anything of local or general importance to write about, it must be distinctly understood that we are not responsible for opinions expressed by correspondents. We must ask correspondents to state their views as briefly as possible, and to bear in mind that any screed of a scurrilous character will be promptly dumped into the W.P.B.—ED. R.]

Re Bush Fire at Blackburn.

DEAR REPORTER.—Permit me through your columns to express my sincere thanks to Constable Selwood, Messrs Tolmie, Foster, Jennings, Bail, Hone, Wicking, Mr Game's sons, and others whose names I have been unable to get, for their kind and prompt efforts to limit and extinguish the fire that was started in my paddock on Boxing Day. Their conduct was in marked contrast with that of the picnic party, whose carelessness caused the fire, but who, instead of assisting to check the mischief, left for fresh fields with the utmost speed, and, it is almost superfluous to add, without leaving any trace as to their identity. Considerable damage was done to my neighbors' grass and fences, but had it not been for the energetic action of the gentlemen named, the devastation would have been far more extensive, involving probably several orchards and homesteads. Thanking you in anticipation. Yours, &c., T. R. B. MORTON.

DEAR REPORTER.—Through the columns of your paper I beg leave to tender my sincere thanks to Messrs Solwood, Foster, Bail and Tolmie, son and jun., for their very valuable assistance in putting out the bush fire in my paddock at Blackburn on Boxing Day. I wish also to thank Mr Harry Burrowes, of the Box Hill fire brigade, for trying to procure permission from the head fire station to attend the fire, being as it was out of their district. Thanking you in anticipation—Yours, &c.,

THOS. J. JENNINGS.

"Duigabeena", Blackburn, 2/1/1901.

Have You Ever Tried * * * * *

* * An ADVERTISEMENT in *

 The Reporter? 

A SONG OF WOMEN.

Our lips shall sing the victory,
Vow vengeance for defeat;
Our gold we bring with willing hands,
Nor come with lagging feet.
With voices brave and kindling eyes
We arms our men to fight,
And with the lost farewell is said
We stand and face the night.
At night the little lamps go forth
To seek the newly slain,
The broken into house of life
That shall not stand again!
England! O splendid name, for thee
With all we have we part,
Nor keep but woman's heritage,
Tears and a breaking heart!

—:—
Westminster Gazette

Welcome to Private T. Mason.

A very pleasant evening was spent at the residence of Mr George Garrett, Oxford street, Box Hill, on Tuesday, the 8th inst. The employés of Messrs Garrett Bros. had combined together to do honor to one of their number, Private T. Mason, who recently returned from the war in South Africa, where he served with the 1st contingent. On behalf of his fellow employés, Private Mason was presented by Mr G. Garrett with a very handsome tea set, accompanied with a letter, which expressed the high esteem in which he is held by his fellow workmen, and their appreciation of his loyalty in going to South Africa to fight for queen and country, where he was fortunate enough to escape without either wounds or sickness.



Australian Natives' Association

SURREY HILLS BRANCH.

No. 100,

Meets at SURREY HALL, Union Road, on
Alternate WEDNESDAY Evenings.

NEXT MEETING—

WEDNESDAY, JAN 23.

Native Australians, show your patriotism
by joining the A.N.A.
Visitors cordially invited, always welcome

The Drowning Fatality at Tunstall.

Judging by the evidence adduced at the magisterial inquiry held at Mitcham, touching the death by drowning of the two little Fosbrook girls, there were several discrepancies in the account of the affair published last week. The girls were aged 7 and 5 respectively, and they were in the company of an older girl when the unfortunate occurrence took place. According to this girl's testimony the younger girl Fosbrook was trying to cross over a dangerous place when she fell in the waterhole, and the sister in trying to save her also fell in and both were drowned. The witness tried to pull them out, but could not do so, and then ran away for assistance. Messrs T. Toogood and D. McClelland (the former fully dressed) went into the water and recovered the bodies, but the poor children had been too long under water to admit of the efforts to restore animation, being unsuccessful. Great sympathy is expressed with Mrs. Fosbrook, who lost her husband about thirteen months ago, and has now been bereft of two children at one stroke, her only surviving child being a baby girl about a year old. A movement has been started in Mitcham with a view of showing practical sympathy with the bereaved mother. A rumor has got abroad that the lives of the children were insured, and we have been asked to state that such was not the case.

OFFER TO REFUND THE MONEY.

Many thousands have been restored to health and happiness by the use of Chamberlain's Cough Remedy. Of afflicted with any throat or lung trouble, give it a trial, for it is certain to prove beneficial. Coughs that have resisted all other treatment for years, have yielded to this remedy and perfect health boon restored. Cases that seemed hopeless, that the climate of famous health resorts failed to benefit, have been permanently cured by its use. Bear in mind that every bottle is warranted and if it does not prove beneficial the money will be refunded to you. For sale by Payne & Boyland, Box Hill, Holliday, Surrey Hills, and W. G. Town, Mitcham.

Veronica Seton-Williams – a short biography

(Continued from page 4)

for Beasley and the Institute in 1947-1948. Among the booklets she illustrated for Beasley is one relating to Jericho. And like some of Veronica's work, her work as illustrator is unacknowledged].

Her exploits at this time made headlines back home in Australia. 'Girl braves rigours of desert', going on to describe her dwelling in tents in deserts, mud huts in small Turkish towns, existing on a diet of little but rice and lentils, communicating mostly in Arabic and Kurdish. Another article: 'Digging for Lost Cities: Girl Archaeologist and her work' stated that Veronica was planning her own expedition, (collaborating with fellow-archaeologist, Miss Jean du Palatto Taylor), to the Upper Euphrates Valley. The article suggested Veronica would need competence and intrepidity, 'well-developed powers of observation' and the 'ability to give orders to a gang of natives.'

World War Two interrupted her archaeological work. Instead Veronica worked for the British Council's Ministry of Information in the Postal Censorship Department. An article in 1948 noted that Veronica did not know the meaning of spare time. In between expeditions she had prepared for the British government a survey of Anglo-Arab relations from 1920-1948. In early 1948, Veronica returned to Australia as part of a world cruise, but also with the purpose of settling her mother's affairs, following Eliza's death in 1947. Veronica revisited 'The Uplands' (described in the article in the last newsletter). In 1949 she was able to return to excavation work at Sakçe Gözü in Turkey.

From 1950-1955, Veronica worked in Cyprus and Turkey and took up studies at the Institute of Archaeology in London, working on her doctoral dissertation under Max Mallowan (Agatha Christie's second husband). Between 1956 and 1960, Veronica was

working on excavations in Syria, with some financial support from the 'Melbourne' (Australian) Institute of Archaeology, and completing her Phd on Syrian Archaeology in 1957.

Her ambitions to delve into Egyptology were finally realised at this time. She began teaching the extra-Mural Diploma in Archaeology, which she continued for the next twenty-five years, also lecturing in Egyptology and Mesopotamian Archaeology at the City Literary Institute. Finally, in 1962, Veronica arrived in Egypt and became Field Director of the Egypt Exploration Society's expedition at Buto from 1964-1968. Her teaching career continued between field trips.

Retirement in 1977 hardly merits the term. Veronica was as busy as ever. She wrote extracts for books, collaborated on writing the new Blue Guide to Egypt, necessitating many research trips to Egypt and wrote her autobiography. Veronica died on 29 May 1992, aged eighty-two, at St. Heliers, Jersey. She donated copies of all her publications to the Baillieu Library at the University of Melbourne.

Remembered as a redoubtable woman at her memorial service, some have commented that this quality was necessary in the face of considerable prejudice she encountered as a woman in a male-dominated field. Others have noted that, in an era of specialisation, Veronica was remarkable for her mastery of an impressive array of languages, cultures, sites and time periods; her meticulous research, extensive publishing and as a source of great encouragement to young scholars. As a self-confessed sufferer of 'word-blindness' and a struggling mathematician, Veronica's remarkable career and achievements demonstrate what is possible with dedication and tenacity.

© G. Bannister 2023.



*Jericho 1936, Veronica and Mrs Garstang 'watching' the excavation of the Neolithic strata.
Veronica went on to excavate with Professor Garstang at Tell Keisan and Mersin.
Photo: courtesy of the Palestine Exploration Fund.*

2026 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 21 March

Saturday 16 May

Saturday 18 July

Saturday 5 September

Saturday 7 November

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

STATISTICS

Photographs catalogued	-	4601
Artefacts catalogued	-	5869
Documents catalogued	-	8564
Museum visitors November–December	-	240

DIARY DATES

Meetings are held at the Schwerkolt Cottage and Museum Complex.

Saturday, 7 February 1pm

Anne Heywood: Living on Heatherdale Road

ANNUAL PLANNING DAY

MONDAY, 23 FEBRUARY

9:30am – 1pm.

Morning Tea and Lunch provided.

All invited. Please advise attendance to Kathy by WHS email or mb 0409 230058 (numbers needed for catering purposes).

Importance of Research!

MYTHS, fables, Dreaming and family stories are all part of life and are usually interesting, but are they real or just the memory of each generation? This thought has arisen due to my own experiences when researching family history. If the stories I was told as a child were true the real story would have been quite different.

The following three examples show how history needs to be checked using authentic original references.

Let me explain.

My father told me that I was 1/8th Spanish through one ancestor, a Spanish princess. How thrilling if it was so. Later, and through research, I learnt that this Spanish ancestor belonged to a step-family. My real male ancestor re-married and it was her ancestor who was Spanish – and she was not a princess.

My mother's story was about her paternal grandfather, a seaman and a whaler who was one of the first white men in New Zealand. She said that he had fallen from the rigging and had broken his shoulder bone [clavicle]. She also said that he had been taken a prisoner of the French at battle of Trafalgar. Another myth. It was her maternal ancestor who had these experiences. This was found when checking his admission to be a Greenwich Pensioner.

Another instance concerns myself. As you are aware New Zealand was one country threatened by a Japanese invasion during WW2. My small son, who gave a morning talk at school, knew I had been an army nurse. He happily told me that he had told everyone that his mother had fought the Japs.

Where would that have gone if not corrected?

Yvonne Fitzmaurice

Do you enjoy your membership of WHS?

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

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

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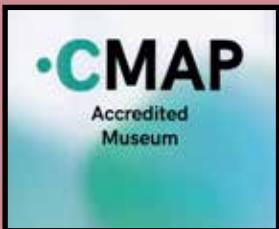
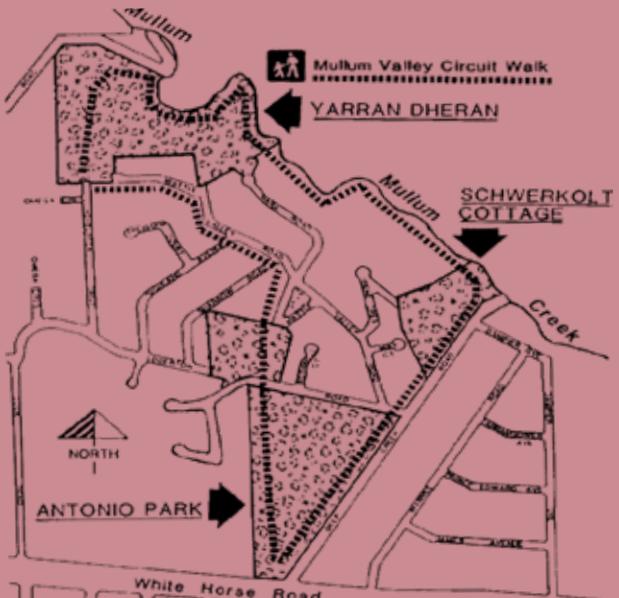
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The Whitehorse Historical Society Inc.

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.



Proudly printed by **Matt Gregg MP** Federal Member for **Deakin**

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