



Nepean Historical Society
Sorrento

The Nepean

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FROM THE ARCHIVES

You may have noticed that several Historical Societies in our area are this year celebrating the 150th anniversary of their townships' being proclaimed. What about us?

George Coppin was expecting Sorrento to be proclaimed as a township about 1890 [when he was trying to raise money for a town hall to be built next to the Mechanics' Institute] as soon as the population reached a certain number.

His plans fell through, due to the 1890 depression and a lack of enthusiasm locally, and although the population rose in size, the proclamation seems to have been forgotten.

When an interested person enquired in 1951 about the proclamation date, the Department of Crown Lands and Survey could find no record of one, 'although the area [had] been treated as such since 1870,' and deemed it advisable in April 1952 that the Proclamation should be made. Governor Dallas Brooks signed it on the 29th of April, and it was gazetted on the 7th May.

So, Sorrento will have to wait till 2052 to celebrate even our 100th anniversary – or we could choose 2020 for a 150th anniversary of the year from which Sorrento was treated as a township. I vote for the latter, as a lot more of our present members are likely to be still around then!

Janet South
Research

Source: NHS Archives



COMING EVENTS

WINNERS OF OUR CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

1ST Prize – Margaret Hollister (Hamper)

2ND Prize – Ula Scott (Christmas Cake)

3RD Prize – Bernie Poll (Buckley's Chance Voucher)

COMING EVENTS

March 4th General Meeting 8pm

Speaker: Warren Neale '*The Sorrento/Queenscliffe Ferries*'

April 1st General Meeting 8pm

Speaker: Martin Dixon, MLA
'*From Opposition to Government*'

April 9th Sausage Sizzle outside Bunnings, Rosebud.

May 6th General Meeting 8pm

Speaker: Peter Munro
'*The Boer War/Drayton Grange memorial at the Sorrento Cemetery*'

PROMOTION STALLS

Sorrento	March 12 th	Blairgowrie	March 26 th
Sorrento	April 9 th	Blairgowrie	April 23 rd
Sorrento	May 14 th	Blairgowrie	May 21 st

HERITAGE GIFT SHOP

A Volunteer is needed to assist in the Heritage Gift Shop
Any enquiries, or further information can be obtained from
Bev Baker or Don Ewart on 5984 0255

SPECIAL EVENTS

ART WORKSHOPS

A series of Art workshops with Jane Eldred Byrne was held as a school holiday programme in January. There was a lot of interest in the second week when the steady rain precluded beach visits and the sessions on 13 and 14 January brought a total of 15 participants. We are grateful to Jane who embraced the project enthusiastically and is willing to run a programme again next year. We plan to publicise the events more widely in future.

STEAM TO SURF

The National Trust Heritage Festival *Steam to Surf* is taking place throughout Victoria between 8 April and 8 May. They have produced a comprehensive colour booklet advertising the state-wide activities for the festival.

http://www.nattrust.com.au/heritage_festival_2011



The NHS will be participating in this event with a guided walk from the Foreshore Rotunda to the Ocean Amphitheatre, entitled **Bay to Back Beach**. Doreen Parker, Natasha Wicks and Des Young are on standby to lead groups on **Wednesday 4 May from 11am** and I will handle bookings. We hope that the wide publicity will promote our Society and interest the public in the history of our area.

SAUSAGE SIZZLE AT BUNNINGS ROSEBUD ON SATURDAY APRIL 9

This fundraiser proved very successful last year. Please contact me if you would like to assist. Sharing the workload enables us all to have fun!

Bergliot Dallas 5982 0502



Watsons Hut from the NHS collection

There are fascinating photos and hundreds of other items on exhibition at the Museum.

Why not take the time to come down and have a browse. Entry is free to members.

Open 1:30-4:30

Weekends & Most Public Holidays

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Speakers

We have an interesting group of speakers at our regular 1st Friday meetings at 8 pm, for the first half of this year.

On March 4, we will hear about the evolution and development of the Sorrento-Queenscliff ferry service from a man who was closely acquainted with the story, **Warren Neale**.

Martin Dixon, now Minister for Education will address the April 1st meeting on the transition from opposition spokesperson to Minister.

On May 6, **Peter Munro** will talk on the Boer War/Drayton Grange memorial at the Sorrento Cemetery, while on 3rd June, **Sharon Bowen** will speak to us on McCrae Homestead. As this year is the 150th anniversary of the establishment of Rye, our July 1 lunch meeting at the Rye Hotel will focus on the story of Rye.

Activities

The Heritage and Planning Committee under the leadership of Frank Hindley continues its excellent and relevant work of monitoring development and building plans to ensure they comply with regulations and the heritage ambience of Sorrento. It is a vigilance committee (but not a vigilante committee) which continues to watch over the development of the Eastern Sister site. The president of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies considers the role of this committee to be pertinent and relevant to the community it serves and will be promoting this concept to other historical societies in Australia.

Quarantine Station

Under the guidance of Val Pepler, the NHS continues to liaise with Parks Victoria over the establishment of a museum or heritage centre at the Quarantine Station and meets regularly with Parks Vic management to keep this project at the forefront.

Firearms

The NHS owns 5 firearms which are currently being held in safe custody by the police, pending approval of an application to display these weapons, once they have been appropriately rendered harmless.

Display case

The Society is currently in fruitful discussions for the donation of a display case for the 'Alert', the model of a 139 ton topsail schooner, to protect it from little fingers. The 'Alert' is a sister ship to the 'Rosebud' which sank in 1855 near the settlement now known as Rosebud.

We look forward to seeing you at forthcoming NHS meetings.

Robert Barnes
President

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Collins Settlement

Recently the Nepean Historical Society received a one off Grant of \$5,000 from the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council in a Community Partnership Agreement for a ground penetration radar survey at the Collins Settlement

Sullivan Bay, the site of the 1803-04 Collins Settlement is an important heritage place for all Victorians. The burial areas used during the 1803 Settlement have not been located accurately. However, we do know that at least 19 people died during the 1803 Settlement period. The only remaining evidence of the Settlement is now below ground. The Shire is very supportive of the Society undertaking scientific and historical research of the area and the grant will provide the funds for a ground penetration radar survey of potential gravesites and features. Fortunately the survey area has not been disturbed by development.

During 2010 the Shire allocated sufficient funds for an area to be cleared of weeds and unwanted vegetation. It is proposed that the survey will be undertaken by Eloraine Geo Surveys using ground radar and magnetometer techniques, commencing in February 2011.

Electric Ball

Prices have been obtained for moving the ball back to the original site at the front of the museum. More secure fixings have been designed in order to prevent the ball from being rolled away as has happened in the past. It is anticipated that funds will be provided by the Shire Council for small works within the Ward with approval from our local Councillor. It is anticipated that the work will proceed in the next few months.



External Signage

Two new signs have been erected in front of the museum in Melbourne Road by the Shire Council. These now give a positive new identification for the Society and directions for the public to the museum

Don Ewart

Honorary Secretary

Do you have a story to tell?

The NHS Archives are expanding their Oral Histories and looking for people who would be interested in being interviewed about Sorrento's past. So if you, or anyone you know who has something to contribute and wouldn't mind being interviewed, please contact the Archives team at:

archive1.nepeanh@vic.chariot.net.au or drop into the museum!

FROM THE EDITOR

Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe. *HG Wells*

A NEW YEAR

Welcome to The Nepean for 2011. As new editor, first let me thank Alison Jones for her sterling effort in producing The Nepean over recent years.

As a child, I recall there being at my grandparents house, and every other on The Peninsula for that matter, a copy of T.K.Fitchett's 'Down the Bay'. It was always fascinating to me that people from the city would travel in their finery on a voyage to Sorrento, by sea no less! Sadly I don't see so much of this book these days, nor the obligatory framed copies of 'The Rose Series' photos or much other manifest local history.

It seems that with dozens of houses changing hands in the area every summer there is an increasingly token interest in its rich history.

Many members or their friends live in homes that have a rich past with many stories to be told and memories to be shared. I urge you to share your stories with us by contributing to The Nepean.

Having been an NHS member for a while, I have always enjoyed receiving my quarterly report on NHS activities, and snippets of local history. I hope I can, with your assistance, deliver an interesting and educational journal that may help avoid the catastrophe of diminishing memories.

I look forward to hearing from many of you.

Clive Smith - Editor

thenepean@ozemail.com.au

ATTENTION DUTY VOLUNTEERS

Requests for Research

Do you know there are special forms to be completed by anyone needing answers to questions they may have about family or other history?

These forms are in the folder with instructions for volunteers on the Reception desk.

FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING

At the General Meeting held on Friday 4th February, the guest speaker Pamela Myer Warrender, spoke of growing up in Melbourne as the daughter of Sir Norman Myer, from the mid- 1920s to the 1950s.

Pamela read extracts from her book 'In Her Own Right' telling of her interesting, and different, life. Married to an English aristocrat, then divorced she had to re-think her life as a single woman. Determined to effect change she chaired the Committee of Melbourne and was responsible for the promotion of Australian art and the city of Melbourne.



Pamela Myer Warrender

National Trust Heritage Awards

As part of its upcoming state-wide Heritage Festival the National Trust is introducing an annual award program for heritage excellence through partnerships with local councils and its branches.

The categories associated with the awards are: Creative Reuse of a Heritage Place; New Work/Development within a Heritage Area; Restoration of a Heritage Place; Specialist Heritage Trade Skills; Sustainability and Greening of a Heritage Place.

Nominations will open 25th February and close at the end of March. Award ceremonies to announce category winners will be made in May. For further information jwa45664@bigpond.net.au or 5988 9853.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Jane and Glen McPherson	Sorrento
Helen M Ferguson	Rye
Dale Lewis	Rosebud West
Ian Watson	Darwin NT
(Descendant of the Portsea Fishing Family <i>The Watsons</i>)	

We look forward to making them welcome at our functions.

Judy Walsh, Membership Co-ordinator

HERITAGE & PLANNING GROUP

(formerly Education and Local History)

Neighbouring Block

A planning application has been lodged with the Shire for a residence to be built on the 'battleaxe shape' block at the rear of 177 Ocean Beach Road, which is next to the Museum. The Society has written to the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, expressing concern about the overdevelopment and the detriment to the character and view lines of the neighbouring site (which is occupied by the Pioneer Memorial Garden and our own Watts Cottage and Sorrento Museum and Heritage Gallery). Concerns were expressed also about the likelihood of damaging effects during the construction stage on the functioning of this highly valued heritage precinct, unless the builder is expressly prohibited from using the Gardens site for access and storage.

Ramp outside Manyung Gallery Sorrento

We have noted the widespread opposition of local community groups to the steps and ramp which have been built, apparently at Council direction, outside commercial premises at the corner of Darling and Ocean Beach Roads. This is an example of inappropriate use of public space. It coincidentally contravenes the requirement for the disabled, that obstacles are not permitted on areas of footpath immediately abutting shop fronts.

Coastal Strategy

The ward Councillor and the community groups with which we liaise have brought to our attention the issue of whether the Council will build an Aquatic Centre on the foreshore at Rosebud. The case raises some vital questions of whether the State Government is to follow proper process in planning matters generally, and what policy will be adopted in regard to types of land use allowed along our precious Peninsula coasts.

Collins Settlement Site

In mid-December VCAT's Administrative Tribunal bought down its Order concerning R. Shelmerdine's application to sub-divide The Sisters property at Sullivan Bay Sorrento into five building lots. After receiving and considering expert witness statements which the Tribunal had called for at its earlier hearing VCAT gave approval for a permit to be issued, with a number of restrictive conditions. The Group has been studying the Order and the

voluminous material which had been introduced as new evidence, and is continuing to monitor the impact on the Collins Settlement Site, which is covered by a Heritage Overlay in the Mornington Peninsula Planning Scheme and includes the Eastern Sister, the Western Sister, and the Sullivan Bay beach and hinterland between. At a meeting arranged by Dr. Barnes, representatives of the Group met with the senior Shire Officer in charge of Planning to seek clarification on some of the issues relating to the Shelmerdine case.

The Society has received from the Shire a grant to pay for a preliminary, non-intrusive archeological survey in a key area of the site. (see the notes of the Secretary, Don Ewart, on page five of this issue.)

Frank Hindley
Convener

SORRENTO CEMETERY TOURS

SUNDAY 17 APRIL 2011

11 am & 2 pm

**Meet at the Sorrento Cemetery gates
[Normanby Road, Melways 157 J8]**

to see selected grave sites & hear stories about:

- Sorrento's shipwreck coast
- The Drayton Grange - Boer War tragedy
- Several of the town's local identities

Plus

- Politicians, sporting personalities, victims of crime & other celebrities

**Peter Munro, a qualified PTGAA guide,
will conduct the 1 hour [approx] tour.**

All proceeds to go to the Nepean Historical Society Inc.

Cost \$5 p.p.

Numbers limited so early bookings essential

Phone: 5982 0502 for enquiries & bookings

AN UNFORTUNATE DECISION

James Newton was not blessed with a long and fortunate life. At the age of 29, his life was tragically cut short by a shipwreck on December 28th 1893.

Had Newton ever heard of the township of Sorrento, he might have dreamt one day of catching a glimpse of its ocean and bay coast lines, but he never did. By a strange quirk of fate, Newton, two days earlier made an unfortunate decision : a decision that would cost him his life.

The S.S. Alert was a commercial ship built in Glasgow in 1877. It was constructed for the gentle Lochs of Scotland and was deemed totally unsuitable for ocean conditions. After finding its way to Australia, it was employed as a transport ship on the Melbourne-Gippsland run. It is here that we pick up the connection between the Alert and Newton.

James Newton was employed in the Government Printing Office in Melbourne. He took his annual leave on the 18th December deciding to spend the first portion of it in Bairnsdale where he had lived and worked some years ago. He had travelled to Bairnsdale by train intending to spend Christmas with old friends.

On the afternoon of the 28th December, the Alert with 3 passengers and 13 crew foundered in stormy weather and heavy seas near Cape Schanck. One man, the ship's cook Robert Ponting survived. He clung to a portion of a cabin door for 14 hours only to be washed ashore on a Sorrento back beach, more dead than alive.

The ship sank and lay on the sea bed approximately 10 kms. off shore near Cape Schanck for 113 years until in June 2007, it was discovered by a team of ocean divers who had been searching for its wreck for over two years. Five of the bodies that were washed up on beaches around Sorrento are buried in a group grave in the Sorrento Cemetery. Newton's body was never recovered.

James Newton was one of three passengers on board the Alert, but why would he be considered any more unfortunate than the 15 other poor souls who perished on that late December afternoon ?

The answer lies in a short paragraph in the Saturday evening Herald of 1893.... "Mr James Newton a saloon passenger on the S.S. Alert drowned on December 28th.inst. Only 10 days prior, he had purchased a return rail ticket from Melbourne to Bairnsdale".

With a sudden and unexplained change of mind, Newton, at the last moment, sold his return railway ticket thus converting his return passage to Melbourne on the Alert. This transaction took place only half an hour before the Alert hoisted its gangway and sailed into the history books as yet another tragic statistic of Southern Ocean maritime disasters.

James Newton had indeed made an unfortunate decision: one that he would never live to regret.

Peter Munro



Wreck of The S.S. Alert - Battling with the Waves

THE NEPEAN ONLINE

You may have noticed a deliberate attempt to include more photos and other pictures in The Nepean. These are quite marvellous when they are viewed in the form of a PDF (via email or on the website). If you do have access to email or the internet either directly or through a child or indeed grandchild, I would heartily recommend you opt to receive The Nepean in this way. Please let us know if you are able to be sent The Nepean at : thenepean@ozemail.com.au The Ed.

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ESSENTIAL READING

If you don't have a copy of these books at hand, to impress your family and friends with your local knowledge, they are available from the NHS bookshop.

Come in and have a browse or purchase them online via the website.

Poems of a Peninsula Pioneer	\$15
Tram to Sorrento (Updated)	\$20
The Butcher, the Baker, the . . .	\$25
Wrecks in the Rip	\$10

OFFICE-BEARERS 2010—2011

PRESIDENT: Dr Robert Barnes

VICE-PRESIDENTS : Doreen Parker, Natasha Wicks

SECRETARY: Don Ewart

ASSISTANT SECRETARY : Bev Baker

TREASURER: position vacant

ARCHIVIST: Doreen Parker

DISPLAYS AND COLLECTION CO-ORDINATOR : Joy Kitch

COMMITTEE: Bergliot Dallas, Brendon Guy, Jenny Nixon,
Margaret Broadhead, Val Pepler, Janet South

The Nepean Historical Society appreciates the support of -



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SUSTAINABLE
PENINSULA

