



Nepean Historical Society
Sorrento

The Nepean

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Shedding Light on Our Artefacts

Providing enough light to enable precious artefacts to be seen without damaging them is always an issue for museums large and small.

Recently at Sorrento we have been delighted that current technology has solved some of our challenges. Don Ewart invited local electrician Richard Armstrong to inspect our very dim cases on the north wall of room 2.



A Delightful New View

These display cases are full of fascinating objects relating to our local history but were in deep shadow.

Richard suggested we could use LEDs on a narrow 10 mm strip wire. Richard and his partner Michael were able to affix these strips with their adhesive backing, inside the corners of the cabinets, wire them through the base and now we have light!!

Come and see this so very much improved display.

From Joy Kitch
Collection Coordinator



COMING EVENTS

- Dec 2nd** **Members Christmas Function**
See details below
- Dec 17th** **Drawing of Raffle**
- Feb 3rd** **General Meeting 8pm at the Museum**
Speaker: Mr Mark Ryan
Topic: 'Discovery of TSS Coramba'
- Mar 2nd** **General Meeting 8pm at the Museum**
Speaker: TBA

PROMOTION STALLS

Dec 3rd	Sorrento	Dec 17th	Blairgowrie
Jan 7th	Blairgowrie	Jan 21st	Sorrento
Feb 11th	Sorrento	Feb 25th	Blairgowrie

MEMBERS' CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

Friday 2nd December, 2011 at 5.30pm at the Museum

Cost - \$10 per person, pay at the door

Please telephone 5984 0255
or email nepeanhs@satlink.com.au
to register your name for catering purposes

ALL WELCOME

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Noel Mc Cormack	Ainslie ACT
Joan Hoskins	Portsea
Steven Woodford	Prahran
Anneke & Frans Bos	Sorrento
Valerie and Klaus Stielgbauer	Dromana

We look forward to making them welcome at our functions.

Judy Walsh, Membership Co-ordinator

SPECIAL EVENTS

Unique Sorrento

As an introduction to their exploration of "What makes Sorrento unique?", the Grade 1 and 2 classes at Sorrento Primary School had a visit from Natasha Wicks and me at the beginning of the term. We focused on the sum of the environmental and historical components of the uniqueness of our area:

The 1803 camp at Sullivan Bay, though short-lived, was the first place in Victoria where white people settled, over thirty years before Melbourne was thought of.

State School 1090 having been founded on September 18 in 1871 is now 140 years old. We considered the differences between schooldays at that time and in the present: one teacher, one room for all levels of learning, blackboards, slates etc. Natasha portrayed a student arriving late for school and giving an explanation for her tardiness. She described the difficulties of sharing a bedroom with seven siblings, the chores to be done before school and the long walk involved when the horse was not available. She also



State School 1090 c1930 - NHS Collection

presented the teacher with an apple!



Bergliot and a tardy
Natasha Wicks

We all marvelled at the amazing achievements of **George Coppin** - his acting career, his large family, his holiday house *The Anchorage*, and the cow he brought down from Melbourne on the paddle-steamer for the season to provide milk. His entrepreneurship put Sorrento on the map as a tourist destination.

The students enjoyed hearing about the paddle-steamers, the tram to the back beach, the Continental Hotel and its claim to fame as the only four-storey limestone building in Australia, our own Mechanics' Institute and the Athenaeum Theatre, The Baths and Sorrento Park. Natasha explained that Coppin introduced new birds and animals to Australia such as camels, some of which were used by Burke and Wills on their

exploration of the inland. He also brought in roller skates and established a rink in the Mechanics' Institute!

The students were intrigued and are enthusiastic about their follow-up visit to the Museum and Watts' Cottage in November. We are planning a fun day with hands-on activities.

Bergliot Dallas, Co-ordinator of Group Tours

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK



The Electric Ball

Visitors to the museum recently will have observed that at long last the electric ball has been returned to its traditional position in front of the museum in Melbourne Road.

Thanks are due to Con Mullen for designing the frame that will hold the ball securely in place and for planning the new base. Thanks also to those

members who helped at various times and to John Trembath from Sorrento Rotary who also provided valuable assistance. The Mornington Peninsula Shire Council has also been very supportive. Treating the rusted surface of the ball and painting of the new steel work will be completed in the next few weeks.



The Disaster Bell

The disaster bell that collapsed during a storm last year has also been restored in its old position east of the entrance porch by the Shire Council, and the post and yolk supporting it have been painted.

It is anticipated that two new interpretive signs will tell the story of both the ball and the disaster bell.

Promotional Stalls

In October we had the opportunity to promote the Society with a stall at the Community Fire Information Day. Speakers at the meeting were Simon Thoring from the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, David Waller from CFA Community Engagement and Damien Sayer from Parks Victoria.

Also in October we were able to have a stall at the Sorrento/Portsea Red Cross Car Boot sale held at the Macfarlan Reserve. Unfortunately the poor weather on the day affected attendance but in the end the day was quite profitable for the Society's Shop. Thanks are due to Red Cross for arranging for us to be under the shelter of the pavilion verandah.

Don Ewart - Honorary Secretary

ATTENTION DUTY VOLUNTEERS

At the October meeting of the Management Committee it was decided to promote Watts' Cottage by making a visit to the Cottage available for a gold coin donation for those people who don't want to spend time in the Museum.

In fine weather please place the special notice board you will find inside the Cottage outside leaning against the wall beside the Cottage door.

Remember to keep the Cottage locked at all times when you are not in attendance.

HERITAGE WATCH

Police Point Shire Park

The Shire is developing Police Point as a recreational park at the entrance to Point Nepean. Recognising that Police Point is an integral part of the old Quarantine Station and is included on Australia's National Heritage List, the Shire has engaged heritage consultants to assist in the planning. Public consultation has extended to a meeting with planners in the main street of Sorrento one Saturday in October, and to monthly meetings of representatives of the Sorrento community groups, held at NHS. Draft plans are on display at The Sorrento Museum.



Hotel Sorrento and Hotham Road

The Hotel Sorrento is planning major alterations and landscaping facing Hotham Road. Community group representatives are due to meet Shire officers at NHS in November for discussion about the Shire's own plans for the completion of roadworks and landscaping in the abutting area between the hotel and Sorrento Park opposite.

Collins Settlement Site

NHS is represented on a community group (convened by Charles Cayless of the Conservation Group) to further the coordinated development of the Collins Settlement Site. A preliminary investigation of signage across the area and its approaches has been undertaken by the two NHS representatives, and has led to proposals to have Sullivan Bay properly named, and for Council to designate the area next to the Tideways property as Sullivan Bay Reserve.



Other Coastal Issues

A number of issues which have arisen in the Shire are of current concern, especially insofar as they threaten planning strategy for what is arguably the peninsula's most valuable asset - its coast. These issues include the illegal construction of a large private pool on foreshore crown land at Mt Eliza; and the threat to bypass proper process in order to allow major commercial development on the Rosebud foreshore. Unsatisfactory resolution of these issues would set bad precedents for all parts of the Shire.

*Frank Hindley, Convener
Heritage and Planning Group*

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Original Quarantine Station Records

The Nepean Historical Society holds several highly significant original items from the former Quarantine Station at Portsea.

Euan McGillivray, a Museum consultant, was contracted by the Nepean Historical Society to carry out a significance assessment of materials held at the former Quarantine Station museum and in the Nepean Historical Society museum and archive collection at the Sorrento Mechanic's Institute.

Euan identified a number of highly significant artefacts at both locations. In the archives area Euan's report states that "All original paper and photographic material is of high local, state and national significance."

Archival articles of particular significance at the NHS include:

The Storekeeper's record, 1856 – 1880 which is the log and record of James Walker, the storekeeper in charge of the Quarantine Station from 1856 – 1880.

Entries include items of food, clothing and other personal materials; general expenses associated with requisitions to 'staff and station'; and details of stores supplied to the police, the surgeon and the Chief Medical Officer.



The Storekeeper's Record - McGillivray Report

The Browning album which is a photographic album compiled by Dr John Browning who was Medical Officer and

Station Superintendent in 1885. The album is a significant pictorial reminder of life around the Station which is all the more important for being taken by an important participant.

The Society is currently discussing the location and management of the collection with Parks Victoria.

Doreen Parker
Archivist



The Browning Album - McGillivray Report

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.

A SPECIAL EVENT ON 4th NOVEMBER

History came to life on 4 November in our Museum and Watts' Cottage for Sorrento Primary School Grade 1 and 2 students thanks to a group of enthusiastic NHS volunteers in period costume.



The Volunteers

presided over a table of mysterious household objects from days gone by which the students were able to discuss and handle. In the clothing section Jo Davie and Elaine Nicholls, splendidly dressed, demonstrated the intricacies of corsets and other relics of the past!

Watts' Cottage was a hive of activity as each child contributed to whipping cream and making butter while watching Cara Robinson making scones which were



Bergliot and Cara

handed round for all to enjoy.

Our schedule was kept on track by David Dallas, the bellringer.

Faye Poll and Sue Halley provided back-up support and Paul Fitzjohn took the excellent photos.

My thanks to all who helped to make the day such a success.

Bergliot Dallas

From Natasha Wicks the children heard about the way of life of the Boonwuring people and lime-burning, the first local industry of white settlers. Rhonda Fitzjohn, assisted by the silent figure of Lieutenant David Collins, described the short-lived settlement at Sullivan Bay in 1803.

Barry Nicholls told stirring tales of shipwrecks and rescue. Des Young's focus on transport included the paddle-steamers that brought visitors from Melbourne and the Sorrento Tram that linked them with the Ocean Beach.

Joy Kitch, attired in early motoring gear,



Jo Davie, Barry & Elaine Nicholls

baked on the fire in the camp oven. They probably think I am of the same vintage as the cottage as I was able to tell them about life in the olden days! At the end of the session, the Devonshire scones were



Meg Dallas (school principal) & David Dallas (Bellringer)

SORRENTO A HUNDRED YEARS AGO



1911 revealed Australia's census to have a population of 4,435,000 people. Which bank was established? Of course it was the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. In a personality and country race, Amundsen won the victory to be the first to the South Pole and for all those wanting to hum a tune, 'Alexander's Rag Time Band' was the number one hit tune of 1911.

My three hours of Research at the State Library of Victoria into the events and happenings within the Sorrento community in 1911 was interesting to say the least. About ½ way through my research, I began to wonder just how many times George Morce, a local identity would be brought before the Sorrento Court. I had reached the month of August and already he had managed 4 appearances (3 for being drunk and disorderly with the usual fine of 10/- or 48 hours' default) and one for throwing a missile which turned out to be a beer bottle.

Here are a few further snippets of daily life in and around Sorrento in 1911 as

Mornington & Dromana Standard

CIRCULATING THROUGHOUT THE MORNINGTON PENINSULA.

1143 Printed and published by W. H. Price, at the office of the "Mornington Standard," Mornington, in the State of Victoria.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28 1911

Registered at the General Post Office, Melbourne, as a newspaper. PRICE, 2d.

reported in "The Mornington and Dromana Standard" of the day:

Youth Shot in Sorrento: The New Year brought tragedy to the small community when Norman Morton an eighteen year old holiday visitor to Sorrento was found on the morning of New Year's Day with a bullet wound to the forehead. He was conveyed in a wagonette to Dr. Broughton's surgery and died several hours later. An inspection of the crime scene followed and a six chambered revolver with two cartridges in the chambers were picked up.

Nude Bathing at Portsea: Constable Brennan proceeded against a party of 4 Melbourne males for behaving in an indecent manner by bathing off the Portsea Pier in a nude state on New Year's Day. When the case was dismissed, the editor of the paper was prompted to write...."is it no offence to run about the pier at the little village of Portsea in a nude state?"

Sorrento Pier Extension: On the 6th of May 'The Leader' reported on a deputation of Sorrento residents to the acting minister of Public Works asking that the Sorrento Pier be lengthened by 60' and widened by 10' to accommodate the increasing influx of tourists conveyed from Melbourne to Sorrento by bay steamers. The cost to this project was estimated to be £3,000. It was stated that in the previous year over 114,000 people visited Sorrento by the bay steamers. The shipping companies had been asked to contribute £100 each to the overall cost

YOUTH SHOT AT SORRENTO.

At Sorrento on Tuesday morning, a youth named Norman Morton, aged about 18 years, a holiday visitor, was found near the Mechanic's Institute with a bullet wound in his forehead. He had been staying with his aunt, Mrs. M'Phee, whose house is close to where he was found.

Two lady visitors saw the youth about 9 o'clock staggering about amongst some low bushes. They called two men, named Francis and Nowell, who found that Morton was covered with blood, and that there was a hole in both sides of his forehead.

Although able to speak, he could not say how the wound had been caused. He was wandering in his mind, and stated that he was shot on the pier by a party of eight men. He was immediately conveyed in a wagonette to Dr. Broughton's surgery, where he was attended to, but the bullet could not be located.

At 2 p.m. the youth died. Close to where he was found his hat and a six chambered revolver, with two cartridges in the chambers, and a box containing about 40 cartridges were picked up.

but had refused. The minister stated that he would place the request before the next meeting of cabinet.

Local Identity Becomes J.P.: In early October Mr. David McFarlan of Sorrento has been made a Justice of the Peace.

Life Saving Corps Practice: This was conducted on the back beach in early October. It took 3 drays to convey the men and gear to the back beach. A rocket was fired across the water to the heads and it took 1 hour 50 minutes from the time the corps left Sorrento until the whole apparatus was placed in position. It is thought that in the event of a marine casualty, the Sorrento Corps will give a good account of themselves as the practice proved successful.

New Rocket House Built: In December a new and up to date Rocket House has been built in Sorrento. The old one was sold at tender to Mr. Chapman for £15.5.0.....and finally

A Letter of Complaint to the Editor: Stating "The cost of shire rates and pan rates in Sorrento are currently enormous and run over three figures .I believe some residents have not paid their pan rates for the last 4 years. Why should a few bear the cost that all should share."

Complaints and grumbles of this topic have changed little in the past 100 years. After all isn't Christmas shopping more important than overdue council rate notices?

"So Dies this Year" (*Georgiana McCrae from 'Georgiana's Journal'*)

Peter Munro



CHRISTMAS RAFFLE

First Prize - Christmas Hamper

Second Prize - Decorated Christmas Cake

Third Prize - Meal Voucher from Buckley's Chance

Tickets: \$1 each or 6 for \$5

Tickets will be available for members to sell in bundles of 6
Butts to be returned to the Museum prior to December 16th

The raffle will be drawn on Saturday December 17th at the
 Museum after the December promotion stall.

**Contact Bev Baker on 5985 4860 or 5984 0255 if you are
 able to sell tickets or wish to purchase some.**

**Please support this annual raffle to assist the work
 of the Museum.**

SORRENTO AND CAPE VERDE

On October 22nd, 14 Cape Verde Islander descendants met, some for the first time, at the Museum. Some had come from as far away as Queensland, and 38 would lunch together at the Portsea Hotel next day. How come? We don't often think of our area as cosmopolitan, but there were settlers from many different countries besides the British Isles in the past.

The Cape Verde Islands, off the West coast of Africa, were owned by Portugal from the 15th century until they won independence in 1975. The population of mixed African and Portuguese blood, have been great migrants due to the poverty of the country, and a group of men, said to number ten, came to our district, perhaps jumping ship, in the early 1850s.

Peter Thompson, and his wife Amelia (née Beck) seem to have come via America and Hamburg. Of the others, some, like Joachin de Pina/Depean, were given easier names by the ship's captain, it is said, and he became John Grant instead!

Once here, they worked mainly with lime or fishing, and married local girls or the daughters of other islanders. Amelia lost her husband in a nasty accident in the lime quarry, took as de facto partner Thomas Mercer, then married an islander Nicholas Demas/Demis, who drowned, then married previous partner Mercer, who also drowned and had almost innumerable children!

John Alexander had researched these families and related or confused families (another Thompson family who came on the Ticonderoga), back in 1992, and we have had several contacts from descendants since giving us information, so Research Officer Janet South had a good deal of material to draw on to share with the "Thompson Family" visitors. Handouts were prepared, such as photocopies of relevant sections of our indexes to the cemetery registers, the school registers, the Rates Records and the first Alienations (first freehold land owners, of which Demas was one). We also have some old school photographs which show some of the Grant and Salvias children, with quite dark skins. Some of our visitors also had darker complexions, and some of the islander descendants had thought they might have aboriginal blood.



875 Melbourne Road

The last descendants we have information about locally are George (Tracker) Thompson, a poultry farmer in Portsea in 1940, and Frank and May (Sue) Grant, who are buried in Sorrento cemetery (1976-7). We should be delighted to hear from/about other family members.

Other names connected with the Cape Verde Islands are Albress, Bennett, Da Silva, and Da Salta. Three houses associated with them are 871 & 875 Melbourne Road, and 64 Hotham Road.)

Janet South



NEPEAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SORRENTO MUSEUM

2012 SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

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For 7 to 12 year-olds

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AT THE SORRENTO MUSEUM

Mechanics' Institute

827 Melbourne Road

Sorrento

(Near the Roundabout, Corner of Melbourne Road & Ocean Beach Road, Sorrento)

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FROM THE EDITOR

COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON

. . . to all readers of *The Nepean*. In this issue we have tried to bring you even more interesting stories about the history of our amazing region. I hope you have enjoyed the new style we have evolved over the year and look forward to all your interesting contributions in 2012. All the best to you and your families.

Clive Smith - Editor
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The Nepean Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the support of -



COMMITTED TO A
SUSTAINABLE
PENINSULA

