



# The Nepean

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Recently students from St Joseph's and Sorrento Primary Schools were invited by the Nepean Historical Society to participate in a creative project for the Sorrento Arts Festival organised by the Sorrento Portsea Chamber of Commerce over the first weekend in October. Years five and six students had the opportunity to work with artist, Jane Byrne, in transforming old mannequins using a range of historic and recycled materials. The results were inspiring and have been much admired.



A 1934 Herald Special Centenary Issue set the themes for the garments. Spring Racing, Australian Forces Servicemen, Travel, Theatre and Music. Students were also inspired by the clothes in the museum's extensive collection. Bodices, three quarter length sleeves, embellished fabrics and layers of lace were an inspiration for their creations. Music manuscripts, old magazines, playing cards, monopoly money, dress makers' patterns and tissue papers were collaged to create layers of fabric and embellished designs.



The mannequins will continue to be on display in the Sorrento Museum and Stringer's window until the end of November. For the first term of 2013 they will be in the Zart Students' Gallery in Box Hill.

Congratulations to Jane and the participants. The Sorrento Portsea Chamber of Commerce's financial support of the project is acknowledged with thanks.



## COMING EVENTS

**Dec 7th                      Members' Christmas Function**

(See details back page)

**Dec 15th                    Drawing of Annual Raffle**
**Jan 5th & 6th            Open Garden**

(See details opposite)

**Feb 1st                    General Meeting 8pm at the Museum**

Speaker: Richard Cotter

Topic: 'The Boon Wurrung' Including viewing of his DVD

**Mar 1st                    (Provisional date pending Survey result . . See p.11)**
**General Meeting 8pm at the Museum**

Speaker: TBA

Join us for dinner at Buckley's Chance at 6.15pm prior to the meetings.  
Book on 5984 2888 and ask to join the NHS table.

### PROMOTION STALLS

Dec 1st	Sorrento	Dec 15th	Blairgowrie
Jan 19th	Sorrento		
Feb 9th	Sorrento	Feb 23rd	Blairgowrie

### MEMBERSHIP REPORT

A warm welcome is extended to the following new members:

Mechelle Cheers

Rye

Kelly Aisbett & Luke English & Family:

Blairgowrie

Lilah, Daisy, Pepper and Olive

We look forward to making them welcome at our functions.

We would like to remind members that the full colour version of *The Nepean* can be received via email. If you would like to receive the newsletter this way and are not doing so presently please email [nepeanhs@satlink.com.au](mailto:nepeanhs@satlink.com.au) with your details and request this service.

**Judy Walsh**

*Membership Coordinator*

## VERY SPECIAL GARDEN OPENING

Both Jane Burke's **Offshore** and Fiona Brockhoff's **Karkalla** will be open on  
**Saturday- Sunday 5-6 January 2013.**



Keating Avenue Sorrento.

Our Society has once again been invited to provide lunches and teas at these always very popular gardens.

Please note these dates in your diary to visit or to be one of the lucky volunteers who spend time serving teas and enjoying this special place.

Contact Joy Kitch on 5988 0467 or email

[joynev@westnet.com.au](mailto:joynev@westnet.com.au) if you would like to volunteer for one of the interesting tasks to be done.



## TOUR GROUPS

During the past financial year the Society hosted 27 group events which included guided walks of the Sorrento Heritage precinct, tours of the museum and Watts' Cottage and bus tours of important Heritage sites in Rye, Sorrento and Portsea as well as four of Peter Munro's Sorrento Cemetery Tours. The visitors were drawn from schools, Probus and other community groups and historical societies and international defence force students. They numbered 724 persons, represented 251 volunteer hours and included Jane Byrne's art workshops for children in the January school holidays.

Many thanks to all those willing helpers who gave so generously of their time to promote our history and bring it to life in innovative ways. Thank you Patricia Ball, Margaret Broadhead, Jane Byrne, Richard Cotter, David Dallas, Jo Davie, Rhonda Fitzjohn, Arthur Hicowe, Frank Hindley, Joy Kitch, Peter Munro, Barry and Elaine Nicholls, Faye Poll, Natasha Wicks and Des Young.

**Bergliot Dallas**

*Coordinator of Group tours*

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT



The Society has had major changes in its executive since the last issue of this newsletter. **Dr Robert Barnes** retired as President prior to the AGM. Robert provided leadership to the Society for 6 years, arranging an excellent programme of meetings, representing the Society in the community and carrying out rostered duties in the Museum and at street stalls.

**Don Ewart** also retired from his position of Secretary, a position he held for 10 years. Don and his wife Suzanne have made an enormous contribution to the Society in many areas, well beyond the scope of Don's role as Secretary.

A new Committee was elected at the AGM in October. I was elected President, Bev Baker Secretary, Joy Kitch and Natasha Wicks Vice Presidents and Yvonne Watson Treasurer. Bergliot Dallas, Janet South, Jenny Nixon, Val Stieglbauer, Jane Eldred-Byrne, Marie Clark and Glenn Whipp were elected as Committee members.

Sadly, **Con Mullen**, a Past President of the Society passed away in August. In addition to his role as President, Con was involved in a number of NHS activities including, recently, the Heritage and Planning Group and the Friends of the Quarantine Station. Our sympathies go to his wife Janet and other family and friends.

**Kevin McDonald** also passed away recently. Kevin was actively involved in many community groups including the Nepean Historical Society. Our sincere condolences to his wife Eunice, his family and friends.

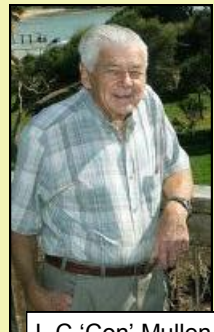
New signage was 'unveiled' at the **Collins Settlement Site** by Dorothy Houghton MBE on the 26th October. The First Settlement Action Group obtained funding and organized its installation. Thanks to Nepean Historical Society member Des Young who played a major role in ensuring the success of the project.

The Society is a partner in the **Deakin University 'Sea Change'** research project. The project aims to understand what people value in their coastal town, what they like what they like and dislike and what they consider to be significant or important, using Sorrento and Queenscliff as case studies. Community focus groups will be held in Sorrento in January and February, interviews are being held with planners and other key figures, and a project website and a blog with a photographic survey are being established.

Consideration is being given to the best time for our **General Meetings**: please complete the survey in this newsletter and return it to us.

Suggestions for speakers and other activities are very welcome; telephone 59840255 or email [nepeahs@satlink.com.au](mailto:nepeahs@satlink.com.au).

**Doreen Parker**  
*President*



L C 'Con' Mullen

## FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK



### Don Ewart

Following the retirement of Don Ewart after 10 years of dedicated service I have stepped into the role of secretary having been Don's assistant for 7 years. His shoes are hard to fill and in no way will I be able to take on all the tasks that Don carried out as he was in fact the Museum Manager as well as NHS Secretary. From my position during those 7 years I witnessed first hand the enormous talents Don brought to the Museum, ranging from the care of our Historic Mechanics' Institute building, meeting tradesmen on site to attend to maintenance matters, liaising with Council personnel where necessary in connection with Council matters concerning our

building, looking after the shop and promotion stalls with his wife Suzanne, ensuring all legal requirements were met and in fact he was the first port of call for all volunteers' questions and problems.

### Volunteers

Volunteers are needed to fill the position of Assistant Secretary and Shop Coordinator and for other duties. Committee members are involved in a range of activities but cannot handle all the work involved in running an effective Society and Museum without help from other members. A number of members are already involved in staffing the Museum and running street stalls; Judy Walsh handles memberships and Clive Smith produces this newsletter and the web page. If you can contribute some of your time please contact the Society on 5984 0255. A range of skills are needed including secretarial, administrative, and retail.

### Assistant Secretary

With this in mind I hope there is someone reading this newsletter who will hear my cries for HELP!!! Someone with basic computer skills to type letters and gradually take on some of the secretarial duties would be welcomed and I will be happy to assist a volunteer to settle into the task.

Please call me on 5984 0255 (Museum) or 5985 4860 (home) when I will be pleased to discuss further details.

### Christmas Raffle

In the coming weeks we will again be raffling a **Christmas Hamper** (1<sup>st</sup> Prize), **Decorated Christmas Cake** (2<sup>nd</sup> Prize) and **Meal Voucher from Buckley's Chance** (3<sup>rd</sup> Prize). Tickets are now available at a cost of \$5 for 6 tickets and I ask members to promote this fund raiser by selling/purchasing tickets. Please contact me as above or email [nepeanhs@satlink.com.au](mailto:nepeanhs@satlink.com.au) and I will be happy to send tickets to you in bundles of 6.

**Remember – all butts to be returned by Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> December as the raffle is drawn at the Museum following the Blairgowrie promotion stall on December 15<sup>th</sup>.**

**Bev Baker**  
Secretary

## HERITAGE WATCH

### In Brief

Architects have been retained by the Shire to examine the Sorrento Post Office heritage building with a view to its retention and appropriate use.

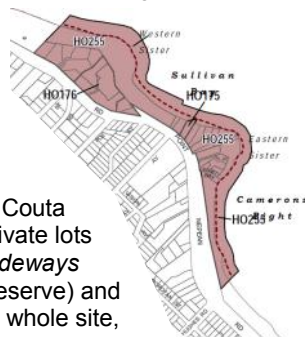
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The proposed heritage path around the Eastern Sister at Collins Settlement Site has been costed at \$1.5m. The budget of \$500,000–600,000 will allow only for a gravel-topped seawall designed to combat erosion, plus boardwalk at two of the most dangerous places.

### The Collins Settlement Site

Estate agents' billboards, and even people responsible for decisions at the Collins Settlement Site, still slip into error about this historic site on matters which were settled long ago. The names "Sullivan Bay" and "Collins Settlement Site", the extent and coverage of the Site, and the dating of the graves continue to be misunderstood.

At least since the State Inquiry of 2001, the area of the Sorrento coast where the first deliberate settlement in Victoria by Europeans has been designated as the **Collins Settlement Site**. This site, of high heritage significance, is the subject of a Heritage Overlay in the State Planning Scheme, giving it a certain protection against inappropriate development. It is centred on the now signposted **Sullivan Bay** beach and picnic area lying between the Eastern Sister and the Western Sister, but in fact extends beyond that, from the Cameron's Bight jetty to just short of the Sorrento Sailing Cotta Boat Club. The **Collins Settlement Site** area includes private lots as well as public land, and includes properties such as *Tideways* (which is the private house adjacent to the Sullivan Bay reserve) and the grand old recently renovated house which crowns the whole site, *Nee Morna*.



### The Graves

The grave sites overlooking the sea at the Eastern Sister are thought to be graves of early settlers in the district, but almost certainly not from the period of 1803-1804. There are records of 18-19 deaths during Collins's time at Sullivan Bay, although the burial sites are unknown. However, following investigations in 2001 and since, especially by Des Young, the gravesites from 1803-04 are thought to be far more likely to be located on the other side of the settlement, that is, at the Western Sister. Archaeological investigations are proceeding, under the auspices of the Shire Council and the Nepean Historical Society.

Additional notes :

1. Sullivan's Cove (with an "s") is a coastal site in Hobart, the destination of Collins's re-location in 1804.
2. The term "First Settlement" has for more than a decade been regarded as an inappropriate and insensitive name for the site, unless qualified as in "First European Settlement", or "First British Settlement".

**Frank Hindley**

*Heritage and Planning*



## ROBERT'S DEADEYE

Our 'Sharing the Past' scanning day for the community in October yielded some photographic treasures and 2 special objects which were donated.

Carolyn Swallow and her husband David brought in a small triple deadeye from the wreck of the Sierra Nevada. This ship was smashed against rocks at London Bridge on the Portsea ocean beach on a wild night in May 1900. The captain was lost and of her 28 crew only 5 reached the shore alive. The Sierra Nevada was carrying a cargo of 1400 tons of 'general merchandise'. The machinery, earthenware, brandy, cotton, whisky was washed ashore and photos of the time show the wreckage feet deep on the beach. (See the NHS booklet *The Sea, The Ships, The Settlers* for a graphic description and photos.)

All you seafaring people out there will know what a deadeye is, but for landlubbers like me a deadeye was used as part of the rigging on a traditional sailing ship. It is a round wooden piece with 3 holes through which ropes pass. They are sometimes called deadman's eyes, possibly due to the positioning of the 3 holes. This deadeye is beautifully worn and smooth, lovely to touch.

Carolyn explained that her brother, Robert Davenport then in his twenties, was a keen diver, a member of the Marine Archaeological Society. With this group he was diving around the Sierra Nevada in the 1970s and found the deadeye. Following the advice of his fellow divers on how to conserve it, Robert immersed the wooden piece



in a bucket of fresh water over many months, changing the water frequently to draw out the salt and preserve the wood. Carolyn has strong memories of this bucket in the garage at their family home and of the deadeye later in Robert's cabinet at Dromana.

Carolyn also donated a wooden fragment through which a pipe has been passed also from the Sierra Nevada wreck site.

The family were all scuba divers, including Carolyn and her now husband. In the late 1960s they would all meet at the Aquarium at Sorrento for breakfast before their day's diving both inside and outside the Bay.

At the Museum have a look at our new special pieces and check out the large deadeyes we have on display from various wrecks. See also the beautiful companionway from the Sierra Nevada, a spar and the many china pieces that have been donated over the years by divers and beachcombers. But this new little one is special and a nice memento of Robert Davenport who has now passed away.

**Joy Kitch**

*Displays & Collection Coordinator*

## SORRENTO 1912



**1912** could be regarded as the 'Titanic' year of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. All other international and Australian events were dwarfed in comparison with this epic maritime disaster resulting in the loss of 1500 lives.

Melbourne saw the price of milk raised to 5d a quart because of dearer feed to the horses. A bill was introduced in the Victorian House of Representatives for £5 a year maternity allowance for white women. Melbourne's new amusement park, Luna Park was opened in St. Kilda and just down the bay at Geelong, the Hills Hoist

rotary clothes line was invented.

Such events probably had little bearing on the daily lives of the townspeople of Sorrento. A glimpse of the pages of newspapers for 1912 reveals the following :-

### **Collision at Sorrento** (January 7)

Last Sunday a collision occurred at Sorrento between the paddle steamers 'Weeroona' and 'Ozone'. The 'Weeroona' had already berthed at the pier when the bow of the 'Ozone' struck the stern of the 'Weeroona'. The 'Ozone' was not damaged but the 'Weeroona' required minor repairs before she could leave Sorrento. It is believed that the collision occurred due to a gust of wind as the 'Ozone' was berthing. Questions are now being raised about the length of the Sorrento pier. It appears to be too small to accommodate passengers disembarking from 2 vessels at a time.



### **Bather drowned in Treacherous Surf** (January 22)

A twenty year old visitor to Sorrento, Alan Hamilton, was swimming with his sister on the back beach below the tramway terminus. Hamilton, from Yea who could swim, was swept out to sea by a large wave. Constable Rawlings was soon on the spot but was unable to recover the youth. His body was recovered five days later. An inquest into the drowning returned a verdict of accidental drowning. However Mr. Buzolich who presided over the inquest stated that warning posts should be erected and life buoys should be placed in an accessible position.

### **Dispatch Box Missing** (January 29)

Sir Walter Bartellot, aide de camp to The Governor General, was travelling on The 'Ozone' from Melbourne to Sorrento. Upon arrival he discovered that he had lost a green Moroccan dispatch box containing important letters and documents belonging to Australia's Governor General Lord Denman. The dispatch box was obviously taken off The 'Ozone' by mistake. Its return to Government House will be welcomed.

### **Road Closed at Quarantine Station** (February 13)

Residents of Sorrento and Portsea areas met last night at the Athenaeum Hall to protest against the action of the quarantine authorities in closing the road to the public. The meeting was presided over by Councillor E. Clark.



## SORRENTO 1912

### **'Blood's Thicker Than Beer'** (March 6)

William Morce charged with being drunk in charge of a horse and dray appeared before Mr E. Clark at Sorrento Court. Before the trial Const. Brennan objected to Clark sitting on the case as he was a relative of Morce and stated that he should step down. Clark would not. The matter proceeded with Clark dismissing the case and telling Morce he should not get drunk any more.

### **Death of a Pioneer** (March 20)

John Watts, a ranger on the back beach working under the late George Coppin, died at his residence on the 18<sup>th</sup> of March. The funeral held by the Rev. Mr Rodda was attended by a large gathering. Mr Watts' son, Mr H. Watts, was the president of the local A.N.A. Branch. After the funeral, the disgraceful condition of the road resulted in several vehicles becoming bogged.

### **Fire at the Continental** (April 20)

A fire broke out in the lower bar of the Continental Hotel just after lunch on Friday. A number of residents formed a chain gang and passed buckets of water to the fire. After 1½ hours, the fire was put under control. The storeroom where the fire originated was gutted and considerable water damage occurred. The hotel and furniture were covered by insurance.



Continental Hotel - NHS Collection

### **Rocket Crew Not Required** (October 1)

The 37m brig 'Edward' met with a mishap by running aground off Beacon Rock near Point Nepean. The 'Edward' was on a voyage from Oakwood, Tasmania to Port Pirie, South Australia with a cargo of 200,000 feet of hardwood timber. The Sorrento life-saving corps under the direction of Captain Morgan stood by at Point Nepean from about half past eleven that evening until five in the morning. The services of the rocket crew were not needed as the crew of eight were taken off the ship by lifeboat and landed at Queenscliff at 3.00am. Wave after wave broke over the stern and subsequently the 'Edward' broke up. All her cargo was lost.

### **Body on the Beach** (November 9)

The body of a man was found washed up on the back beach of Sorrento. The body was much decomposed and appeared to have been in the water for a long time. The head and hands were missing. The body was that of a tall stout man in grey tweed trousers, brown socks and Balmoral boots. As there were no papers on his person, the body could not be identified.

The year 1912 could possibly be best summed up as a year of accidents both on the world front and local stage. The Sorrento locals witnessed a drowning, a shipwreck, a hotel fire, misplaced Vice Regal property and a conflict of judicial interests. I just can't wait to see what 2013 brings.

.....'and so dies this year' (Georgiana McCrae)

From "Georgiana's Journal".

**Peter Munro**

## ROSTER VOLUNTEERS 2013

Thank you to all our roster volunteers who have welcomed the visitors to our museum during 2012.

Feedback from local people and from holiday-makers has been very positive concerning how attractively our museum is presented. Well done!

I would especially like to thank those volunteers who so willingly changed their roster days with others who had to make different arrangements. Also we were very appreciative of our "mentors" who helped train our new members so supportively.

I am now working on our 2013 roster which will have a similar order and format to this years. As I have previously announced, if you have any holidays booked, parties, imminent births or footy finals to attend to, please let me know the dates that you will not be available A.S.A.P.



My home phone: 5984 1753 or email [rhondaandpaul@gmail.com](mailto:rhondaandpaul@gmail.com)

I would like to delight you all by giving out the new rosters at our Christmas function. I have sent our recent members, who have joined this year, an individual letter inviting them to volunteer on our roster.

Hopefully they will take this opportunity to get to know other members and we can continue to be friends and mentors.

As usual, the School Holiday Roster will be a different document.

Many thanks and best Christmas wishes

**Rhonda Fitzjohn**  
*Roster Coordinator*

## FROM THE EDITOR

Great to see contributions from various people in this edition of *The Nepean*.

Many members of the Society, unbeknown to themselves, have interesting stories to tell and fascinating artefacts to show the rest of us.

Please feel free to send me an idea for a story even if you think no one else may be interested. Have a Merry Christmas and a safe New Year.

The Ed. Contact me at [thenepean@ozemail.com.au](mailto:thenepean@ozemail.com.au)

## MEETING TIME SURVEY

The Nepean Historical Society is reviewing the time of its monthly meetings and would appreciate your views.

Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire by completing it online by going to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FJJK2K7> or by completing the following form and mailing it to The Nepean Historical Society P.O. Box 139 Sorrento VIC 3943 by 31st December.

**1. Are you a member of the Nepean Historical Society?**

- ☐ Current member
- ☐ Lapsed member
- ☐ Supporter
- ☐ None of above

**2. If you are a member, about how long have you been a member?**

- ☐ Less than one year
- ☐ 1 to 5 years
- ☐ More than 5 years

**3. How often do you attend the Society's monthly meetings?**

- ☐ Regularly
- ☐ Occasionally
- ☐ Never

**4. Which of the following meeting times would suit you?**

- ☐ 1st Monday morning in month
- ☐ 1st Wednesday morning in month
- ☐ 1st Thursday morning in month
- ☐ 1st Friday morning in month
- ☐ 1st Friday in month at 5pm followed by optional dinner
- ☐ 1st Friday in month at 8pm after optional dinner (current time)
- ☐ None of the above - won't be attending meetings

Other (please specify) .....

Thank you for completing this survey.  
Your input will assist us in improving our services to members.



NEPEAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

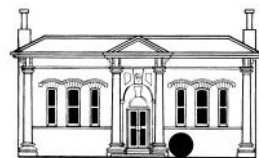
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Nepean Historical Society  
Sorrento

**OFFICE-BEARERS 2012—2013**

PRESIDENT: Doreen Parker

VICE-PRESIDENTS : Natasha Wicks, Joy Kitch

SECRETARY: Bev Baker

ASSISTANT SECRETARY : Vacant

TREASURER: Yvonne Watson

ARCHIVIST: Doreen Parker

RESEARCH OFFICER: Janet South

DISPLAYS AND COLLECTION COORDINATOR: Joy Kitch

COMMITTEE: Bergliot Dallas, Jenny Nixon, Val Stieglbauer, Jane Eldred-Byrne,  
Marie Clark, Glenn Whipp

**MEMBERS' CHRISTMAS FUNCTION**

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2012 at 5.30pm at the Museum**

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

Please telephone 5984 0255

Or email [nepeanhs@satlink.com.au](mailto:nepeanhs@satlink.com.au)  
to register your name for catering purposes

**ALL WELCOME**

The Nepean Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the support of -



COMMITTED TO A  
SUSTAINABLE  
PENINSULA

