



Nepean Historical Society
Sorrento

The Nepean

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NEPEAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.



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Photo: Jean Stirling [see article page 5]

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

"Summer's lease hath all too short a date".... William Shakespeare
It has been a remarkable Summer with just over double the visitors to The Museum than for the same time last year. Many thanks to all the Volunteers who have occupied 'the front desk' over the Summer.

The 'Family History Unit' is underway and as we go to print the 'Be Connected' program is being conducted with manageable groups learning digital skills and finding their ancestors. Many thanks go to Mark Peasley and Annette Buckland for their work on this initiative. This is a fabulous program that operates on many levels. From 'I'm not sure how to turn on my mobile' to 'the wonderful world of family history'. I'd commend it to any of you who would like to see what the digital world might offer. . . and it's easy! Let Val know if you're keen.

While we are not part of the 'Point Nepean Management Plan Reference Committee', we do have a direct input to what is happening at Point Nepean. We are currently assisting Parks with the implementation of the Parkwide 'Storytelling and Interpretation Project' and have a special role in working to improve the Harold Holt Memorial.

Congratulations go to Jan, Suzanne, Gail and the marvellous 'Stalls Teams' for their efforts over the Summer. Particular note should be made of the recent hugely successful 'Open Garden Scheme' days at the home of Jo and Ges Laycock. Special thanks to them for inviting us to participate.

Rumours that we have abandoned the field on local heritage and planning are incorrect. We are keeping track of a number of issues in the area. But do let us know if you believe there is a local Heritage issue you are concerned about. See the following report.

*Clive Smith
President*

Heritage and planning news

The NHS Committee continues to monitor and address heritage and planning issues, the President (or a deputy) continues to attend the monthly Coalition Meeting with representatives from local community groups and the Nepean Ward shire councillors.

1. Proposal to rebuild the jetty at The Baths.

The NHS Committee wrote to the Shire stating that we did not object to the proposed changes, but emphasising that the site area is of great historical significance and that the public must have ongoing access, especially as many local people contributed funds for the building of the current jetty. Our reps attended the mediation meeting where objections were discussed and the Mornington Peninsula Council Meeting where the application was approved. DELWP is of course the manager of Bay structures and has approved the proposal.

2. The Continental Hotel

At time of writing the current owner continues to claim in the media that work will recommence soon. Heritage Vic and the Shire are regularly inspecting the condition of the building.

3. Application for Retirement Facility at 865 Melbourne Road, Sorrento

Given that it has been agreed that the Spinner house will be saved and restored, NHS did not have further heritage objections. As this site is part of an area subject to a State amendment to a Heritage Overlay, there is a delay in process.

4. Implementation of Point Nepean Master Plan

NHS reps are attending the Parks Vic meetings on planning for interpretation panels. Very little has been reported from the State Committee. NHS is writing to our representatives on the Committee for an update on implementation plans.

5. Former Sorrento Park Dance Hall now the Scout Hall

NHS advised the Shire of possible local heritage significance of this building using the 5 applicable criteria.

6. Mitre 10 Development plans

Shire approved Plans indicate that the façade will not be demolished and a number of single storey shops will be built on Ocean Beach Rd and some at the rear of the block.

We encourage NHS members interested in planning issues to check the Mornington Peninsula Shire website for advertised planning applications. This site is open to all. Always interesting

We have been advised that there is now only one part time Shire Heritage Officer following the resignation of Anna B. NHS will raise our concern re this matter with our councillors

Joy Klitch, Vice-President, for the Committee



**S. Croad & his workers
during the building of the
Sorrento Park dance hall**

One Australia Day award this year has a special connection to Sorrento!

Jean Stirling - a member of Nepean Historical Society for the past 25 years - was awarded a Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of her exemplary and dedicated service to the Sorrento community over 65 years of active volunteering. She was born in 1924 in Sorrento - attended Sorrento State School - left to begin work as a telephonist at Sorrento Post Office just prior to WW2 - married in 1950 - began volunteering in 1959 with her children's school mothers group and has never stopped since - she is now 95 and still comes regularly on the museum roster, more recently with her daughter Cathy.



Photo: Jean with Mayor Sam Hearn

Jean's volunteering history includes:

Sorrento State School

Mothers' Group (14 years)

Sorrento Ambulance (12 years)

Sorrento Presbyterian Church
(35 yrs)

Sorrento Red Cross (8 years)

Sorrento Girl Guides (10 years)

Sorrento Op Shop (15 years)

Nepean Historical Society (25 years)

Jean has spent 91 years of her life living in or around Sorrento - has maintained a life long commitment to service to the Sorrento community and we are very proud to have her as a member and volunteer at the Sorrento Museum.



Q is for Quarantine

HERITAGE OBSERVATION

With coronavirus now classed by the WHO as an international public health emergency, world attention has been drawn to the processes used for containment of infection : isolation and quarantine.

The many tens of thousands of people around the globe confirmed as infected being **isolated**, under special conditions of hospitalisation if possible. The majority of these people are recovering, and become non-infectious, but a certain percentage (around 3% at time of writing) are dying.

It is known that in previous epidemics our own Point Nepean Quarantine Station had a specialised isolation ward, built at the end of the Station's line of so-called hospital blocks. This building was especially designed, to allow for stringent isolation of those passengers confirmed ill with contagion.

On the other hand quarantine at Point Nepean generally involved the compulsory detention of people who appeared well. These people were kept under observation, for at least the incubation period of the relevant disease, if they had been in previous contact with infectious people. Most of the Point Nepean Station beds (Blocks 1-5), were for this purpose.

It is interesting how the word quarantine gained currency, starting from the Middle Ages, when for example the Black Death wiped out an estimated 30% of Europe's population. At that time, to protect its trade and citizens the authorities in the great port city of Venice required all ships to anchor for 40 days before those on board could come ashore. This length of time relates to the Italian word for forty, *quaranta*. Hence, quarantine. Medical historians disagree over why 40 days was chosen, but this was deemed sufficient to cover the incubation period of the then prevalent disease. The time has been shortened over the years as circumstances have changed, and knowledge improved. Venice adopted a *trentine* (30 days) at one time, and 14 days has been commonly regarded as sufficient for the current coronavirus.

The yellow flag is the international signal for the letter 'Q'. and has been used on ships and shore to indicate notify or request quarantine. It was flown at the Police Point boat landing, at the entrance boundary to the former Point Nepean Quarantine Station

Frank Hindley

Publications

We have a new book in the Shop: *AGROUND IN THE RIP* by Greg Wane. Many will remember seeing the SS Time aground in the Rip. She drifted onto rocks after her steering failed on an icy cold August morning in 1949, and remained there for many years. But the accident was only the beginning of the story . . . The book retails for \$20.

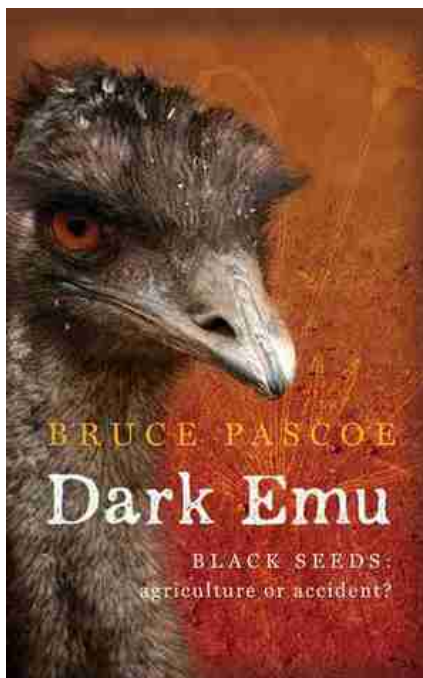
NHS members are invited to contribute to this newsletter by submitting articles preferably of less than 500 words, unless by arrangement with the editor, who in consultation with the contributor reserves the right to edit, abridge or reject material.

**Book review: *Dark Emu Black Seeds: agriculture or accident ?*
Bruce Pascoe, Magabala Books 2014**

I started writing this article some months ago as a review of Bruce Pascoe's 'Dark Emu - Black Seeds: agriculture or accident'. Since then I have been intrigued and sometimes appalled by the often vicious personal attacks and efforts to discredit Pascoe's arguments and family heritage via social and mainstream media.

The book does have faults. A good editor could have removed annoying repetitions and tightened up exaggerations and his selective quoting of some explorers' journals. But Pascoe is not the first to challenge many European colonists' and later historians' depiction of indigenous inhabitants as 'primitive hunter – gatherers'.

Bill Gammage in *The Biggest Estate on Earth* (published in 2011) collated thousands of eye witness accounts of what the country looked like to the first white explorers. They likened the landscape to a 'never ending garden' or 'park'. For a visual depiction of this see the cover of his book using the Joseph Lycett painting (c1820) of a kangaroo hunt in NSW in a grassy woodland landscape. He describes the 'planned, precise, fine grained local caring', and says 'The Law compelled



people to care for their country, while detailed local knowledge enabled them to ensure plants and animals flourished. The traditional custodians of the country maintained grassy areas free of trees through 'fire stick farming', a term coined by Rhys Jones in 1969. A pattern of cool mosaic burning was skilfully timed and conducted at appropriate times of the year.

Anthropologist William Stanner also, in his 1968 Boyer Lectures, spoke of the 'great Australian silence' as this failure to recognize how the First Peoples managed the land. 'The British were blind not only to the spiritual character but also the social achievement of the people they encountered.' He wrote of the 'genius' and 'marvel' of adaptation to environment.

The debate about Pascoe's identity is being used to discredit his writings. Herald-Sun columnist Andrew Bolt has written at least three columns about *Dark Emu*. He claims to write to 'expose' and 'debunk Pascoe's 'wild untruths', 'myths' and exaggerations.' He accuses Pascoe of fabricating his Aboriginal family connections, arguing that 'if he can't tell his own history right, why trust his history of Aborigines?' Warrimay woman and lawyer Josephine Cashman joined the debate in late 2019 to claim that Pascoe's claims to Aboriginal heritage are fraudulent.

In February Indigenous Australians Minister Ken Wyatt criticised Josephine Cashman for referring Pascoe's claims of indigenous heritage to Federal Police and removed her from his Advisory Group, saying that he accepted and believed Pascoe's self identification.

Peter O'Brien through Quadrant Books published '*Bitter Harvest – The Illusion of Aboriginal Agriculture in Pascoe's Dark Emu*' in December 2019 – the title summarises the viewpoint.

These ongoing public statements seem to come down to how we conduct public debate now – ‘facts’ seem to matter less than ‘values.’ Has persuasion been replaced by shaming ?

What are the motives behind these attacks on Pascoe ? Is it fear of acknowledging that European colonists grossly underestimated the skills and sophisticated culture of the peoples whose country they occupied ? Whose people they killed ?

The controversy has not harmed the sales of '*Dark Emu*'; it has been on the nonfiction bestsellers' list for weeks now. I suggest you read it for yourself – or his excellent *Young Dark Emu – A Truer History* which succinctly summarises the key ideas and presents eyewitness accounts from early settlers and explorers accompanied by fascinating illustrations. Also, the author's recently published collection of stories and essays '*Salt*' has some wonderfully moving, sometimes very funny tales.

Our museum book shop stocks '*Dark Emu*'. To order a copy use the link to the NHS bookshop:

<https://nepeanhistoricalsociety.asn.au/museum/bookshop/>

References

- Bolt A. Herald, Sun *Anti-white ABC film a grim sign of intellectual decay*, Nov 18 2019
- Gammage B. *The Biggest Estate on Earth* - Allen and Unwin, 2011
- Pascoe B. *Dark Emu Black Seeds: agriculture or accident ?* - Magabala Books, 2014
- Pascoe B. *Salt Selected Stories and Essays* - Black Inc. 2019
- Stanner W.E.H. *The Dreaming and Other Essays* - Black Inc. Agenda 2009
- Website *Dark Emu Exposed*, <https://www.dark-emu-exposed.org>
Joy Kitch

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome the following new members and look forward to meeting them at monthly meetings and functions:

Antony & Pam Pearse	Margaret Wilson	Nina Sanadze
Helen Peterson	Judy Mullen	Michael Buxton
Glenys Anderson	Bruce Phillips	Fiona Scanlon & Family
Kylie Marshall & Neil Burton		Susie & Ian Blandford
Jennifer Buntine & Kristin Haskett		

Val Stieglbauer - Membership Secretary

PROMOTIONAL STREET STALLS

Blairgowrie	Dec. \$716	Jan. \$515	Feb. \$410
Sorrento	Dec. \$463	Jan. \$437	Feb. \$566
Point Nepean	-----	Jan. \$465	-----
Open Garden	-----	-----	Feb. \$1843

COMING STALLS

Sorrento	14 March	4 April,	9 May,	6 June
Pt Nepean Mkt		11 April (Easter Saturday)		
Blairgowrie	21 March,	18 April,	23 May,	27 June

Suzanne Edginton and Jan Weston

*Nepean Historical Society acknowledges and pays respect to the
Boon Wurrung/Bunurong people, the traditional custodians
of these lands and waters.*



BEHIND THE NAME

Do YOU Know?.....Who or what were:

Cheviot, Nepean, Sullivan, Darbyshire or Corsair?
What connections to the past do these names hold?

That the beach where PM Harold Holt disappeared in 1967,
was the site of a shipwreck 80 years earlier?

That Portsea was named by a convict transported to
Tasmania?

Discover more interesting facts about the naming of Nepean
Peninsula sites during the

National Trust Heritage Festival 2020

18 April - 19 May

1.30 - 4.30pm Saturday & Sunday

Our Heritage for the Future

**Exhibition
at the**

**Sorrento Museum
Mechanics' Institute
827 Melbourne Road
Sorrento**



DISPLAYS AND COLLECTION REPORT

Caring for our Precious Costume Collection

Since its inception in 1965, our Society has been the fortunate recipient of many special clothing donations. Here are two examples. The Janet Wimpole-Worthington collection is an important large group of items ranging from her beautiful ivory wedding dress with long tulle veil, made in 1940, to her baby gloves and shoes, all donated in the 1990s through Mrs. Phillipa Nolan of Sorrento from the Wimpole estate. Janet's father owned the George Hotel in St. Kilda for 85 years, and 'Dalwhinnie' was their Sorrento house.

There are many other precious but more humble items, one of my favourites being the sailor's heavy linen uniform worn by Leading Telegraph Signaller Stanley Gedling on HMAS Sydney during the 1913 Battle of Cocos, when the German SMS Emden was destroyed. Stan was also one of about 40 cadets to walk from Ballarat to Melbourne in 1908 to see the visiting American 'Great White Fleet'. Their 'epic trek' got so much publicity that the government gave them a train trip home, and Ballarat celebrated even the centenary of the event. We have his daughter Mrs. Shirley Walters of Rosebud, first President of the Southern Peninsula Indigenous Flora and Fauna Association, to thank for this small uniform. (Stan was only 5 ft.4 inches tall.) At a recent meeting, ex-Navy NHS member Wayne Bastow explained the uniform's symbols - the killick (Australian kellick) or anchor symbol of rank, and stripes indicating at least 4 years' good behaviour (or officially 'undetected crime').

Managing textiles is quite demanding, especially with the locally high humidity, and our limited museum storage space. Some of these precious large items have been on display for much too long, and were causing concern. Late in 2019, I obtained Committee approval



to get professional assessment of and advice on our costumes, and spent a busy but fascinating day with Victoria Thomas from Melbourne University's Grimwade Conservation Services, examining our displayed costumes and opening the many boxes and drawers where volunteers have stored items.

Despite my fears, her initial assessment was somewhat reassuring, as she said our collection

was in overall 'fair condition', but noted it was at risk unless storage and display conditions and materials were improved soon. To achieve this, the first priority is to purchase 15 archivally safe boxes and improve the hanging and flat drawer storage to reduce the number of items per drawer. A larger space than the current administration office cupboards will be required.

The next priority is to improve conditions for items on display. Dresses must have professionally made supportive underpinnings to reduce deterioration, and some cabinets need to be sealed. And thirdly, a few significant items, such as that lovely wedding dress, need to have professional conservation treatment.

So we shall be taking Victoria's report to the Shire as part of our campaign to have a designated storage facility added to the museum, a campaign which has been going on for years now. During that time, we have received Shire grants for permits and plans. The case continues

Joy Kitch Coordinator

Photo: Victoria Thomas assessing NHS costume collection

COMING EVENTS

Our Monthly General Meetings are usually held on the first Friday of the month [unless otherwise notified] in the Mechanics' Institute at the corner of Melbourne & Ocean Beach Roads Sorrento.

They are free and open to all,
with Tea or Coffee afterwards by donation.

Note: *Committee meetings are usually held on the fourth Monday of the month, but date may change; please contact admin@nhs.asn.au for details.*

Friday 3 April at 8 pm General Meeting

Speaker: Arthur Hicowe who will show videos including *Early Days at the Sorrento sailing Club* with members and their relatives will share stories of the past with us.

Saturday 18 April to Sunday 17 May Exhibition: *Behind the Name*
at 1.30 - 4.30pm on Saturdays & Sundays

For the National Trust Heritage Festival Nepean Historical Society will present a special exhibition, *BEHIND THE NAME*, explaining how various well known local sites came to be known by their present names, and on

Friday 1 May at 7.00 pm

You are invited to view and discuss the exhibition with its creators and bring your enquiries about other local names and their background stories, while enjoying a wine or soft drink and nibbles.

Friday 5 June at 7 pm General Meeting

Speaker to be announced

NEPEAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

Committee 2019-2020

PRESIDENT: Clive Smith VICE-PRESIDENT: Joy Kitch

SECRETARY: Val Stieglbauer TREASURER: Clive Smith

OTHER MEMBERS: Annette Buckland, Marie Clark,
Jenny Nixon, Mark Peasley, Janet South, Cathy Stirling

Other NHS volunteer positions:

Archivist & Research Officer: Janet South

Collection & Displays: Joy Kitch

Cataloguer & Indexer: Bergliot Dallas

Map Curator: Mark Peasley

Librarian: Sally Payne

Photograph Curator: Maggie Broadhead

Volunteers Co-ordinator: Annette Buckland

Street Stalls & Bookshop: Suzanne Edginton & Jan Weston

Tours: Natasha Wicks

The Nepean Editor: Janet South

The Nepean Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the support of:



Disclaimer: Opinions expressed in *The Nepean* are not necessarily those of the Society, whose stated values are non-sectarian and non-political.

