NEPEAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
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Photo: Arriving for the Holidays c.1900 [NHS VNEP P4909]
New NHS President, Clive Smith and retiring President Joy Kitch.

As soon as histories are properly told there is no more need of romances.
Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass

Welcome to Summer

I hope you might find the time to pop into The Sorrento Museum and have a look around. You will no doubt notice that we fit a lot of objects and displays into a limited space.

Unfortunately, we have nowhere to safely store or ‘rest’ many of our delicate objects. To solve this, we have been in discussion with the Shire for some time with a view to adding a secure storage area and workspace at the rear of the building.
We now have plans from the Shire and they have been costed and submissions have been made by Shire officers and ourselves regarding future budget allocation. The plans are available for Members to view at The Museum and to pass on any comments to The Committee.

The Winter and Spring have not been idle time and you may have noticed our stalls in Sorrento and Blairgowrie every month. These are run by Jan Weston and Suzanne Edginton and have been hugely successful this year. While Jan and Suzanne have a small and enthusiastic team of assistants they do need a little help. So, if you feel you could help out for a Saturday morning every month or so, please let us know.

By the time you are reading this we will also have attended the first Point Nepean Craft Market for the season. These are enormous fun and I can recommend the craft, produce and the coffee. The next one is on 21st of January.

As always, our Monthly Meetings have been interesting and well attended. We are having an ‘extra’ Monthly Meeting on Friday 15th of December at 2:00pm, when Sam Holt will talk on ‘Harold’s life at Portsea’ in the lead up to the 50th anniversary of the Prime Minister’s disappearance.

It is pleasing to see we have a steady stream of new members from our Monthly Meetings, walk-ins and the website. If you can think of anyone who might be interested, please bring them along to The Museum or simply direct them to the website. If you have not yet renewed your membership, I urge you do so as soon as possible.

My sincere thanks go to all the hard working volunteers who keep our Museum going. I wish all of you and your families the Season’s Greetings and look forward to seeing you at The Sorrento Museum over the Summer

Clive Smith
**HERITAGE WATCH**

**Joy Kitch, retiring H&P member**

The Heritage and Planning Group acknowledges the valuable contribution to the Group over several years from Joy Kitch whilst she was NHS President. Joy opted to be a regular member of the Group and at the same time carry the heavy load of being both the Society’s President and its Displays and Collections Coordinator. Her close interest and participation in the Group’s work, and the opportunities given us for close liaison with both the general membership of the Society (through monthly meetings) and the general committee of NHS, were greatly appreciated. We wish her well as she continues in the onerous work involved in Displays and Collections.

**Sorrento Ferry Terminal Proposal**

A major current concern is the proposal from Searoads Ferries for a $15m. programme of works at the Sorrento Ferry Terminal. It involves erection of a large new building at the end of Sorrento Pier, radical changes to the foreshore and approach road system, reclamation of two further areas from the sea, extension of the private leasehold area granted to the company, and amendments to the Mornington Peninsula Shire Planning Scheme. NHS’s Heritage and Planning Group team participated at the recent two-day Panels Victoria Hearing, when submissions were presented by the various parties, and witnesses for the proponent were cross-examined.

At the Hearing the team from NHS elaborated on the Society’s 28 July submission, which expressed concern about potential detriment to the heritage character of Sorrento - the town, its foreshore, its pier, its bay views, its arrangements for pedestrians - and contravention of Local Planning provisions intended to protect that character.
A detailed report was given to the general membership of the Society at the NHS meeting on 3 November. The Panel Report is expected to be delivered to the Shire Council and to the Minister in mid-December. The Council has then to debate whether to accept the Panel’s recommendations, before approval from the Minister is sought.

Heritage Review, Blairgowrie-Sorrento-Portsea
The last Council survey of heritage places in the area dates from 1992-97. With new historical knowledge, changes to the Heritage Act, and very substantial increases in pressure from developers, NHS has been acutely aware for some time of the need for revisions to be made to the authorised Heritage places list and more adequate citations.

Heritage Planners at the Shire have now engaged consultants to prepare recommendations for an update, and a meeting was held on 13 November with representatives of community groups including NHS. President Clive has joined the process, and is working on suggestions for addition to the list of heritage places between Sorrento and Portsea. H&P will be making other suggestions for consideration, particularly in regard to precincts such as Collins Settlement Site which appear not to have been the subject of much attention from the consultants. Heritage and Planning advocates that the Review have these characteristics:

(a) fully comprehensive,

(b) sufficient for NHS Archives to use in answering queries from the public, (c) robust enough to be given weight when Planning Applications are being determined through Council/Panel/VCAT processes.
NEE MORNA, the historic Federation-style house in a commanding position at the Collins Settlement Site, was previously approved for a 5-Lot sub-division. Planning approval is now being sought from Heritage Victoria and the Shire by the new owner, wishing to alter the existing boundary between Lots 4 and 5. This is to allow for extension to the existing house and for enlargement of the landscaped area east of the house. The Application contains a highly informative Environmental Impact Statement.

Nee Morna, 3110 Pt Nepean Road, Sorrento
1803 Collins Settlement Site

Photo: NHS Collection VNEP P6318.3
SANDARNE, 140-145 Ocean Beach Road Sorrento. A Planning Application to demolish this Swedish-style fisherman/boatman cottage (early 1900s) and to erect an apartment block, was refused by Council on 19 September. The developer has lodged an appeal to VCAT for a review of the decision. NHS will continue to raise a number of heritage issues about the development.

Sandarne Ocean Beach Road, Sorrento

Photo: Permission to use given by Mornington Peninsula Bandicoot

POINT NEPEAN. It is a matter of concern that there is still no indication from the State Government of when it will release an approved Master Plan covering the Old Quarantine Station and Point Nepean National Park.
HOTEL CONTINENTAL SORRENTO. In response to a call in November for Expressions of Interest, a financial backer has been named as business partner to the hotelier who holds the permit for redevelopment of this heritage Hotel and new apartment block.

MINISTERIAL CHANGES TO PLANNING. A submission has been prepared by H&P in response to a Discussion Paper from the Department (DELWP) concerning Ministerial changes to the Victorian Planning system. It supports the Council in opposing a one-size-fits-all approach. We believe the existing Localised Planning Statement is essential for the Mornington Peninsula’s future, and should remain as major policy. That Statement includes provision for recognition of the Green Wedge as an agricultural and recreational core area for the Peninsula, and for the protection of the special character of the small coastal towns of the Peninsula such as historic Sorrento.

Stop Press - Victorian Planning Changes
Organised by the Peninsula Speaks Group and signed by scores of NHS members, the petitions opposing the changes introduced by the Minister for Planning have now been presented in State Parliament. As planned, 1,000 different signatures from the Mornington Peninsula community were presented each week in each of the nine weeks leading up to the last day of sitting for 2017. Believed to have been initiated by the development industry, the changes substantially reduce the role of both the Shire Council and members of the community in the Planning decision-making process. The government is also asked to re-affirm the provisions of the Mornington Peninsula Localised Planning Statement, which recognises the special character of the Peninsula’s rural areas and small coastal settlements such as the historic town of Sorrento.

Frank Hindley, Convenor Heritage & Planning Group
Prof. Weston Bate & his wife Janice at the NHS 50th Anniversary Sept. 2015  
[Photo: NHS Collection: VNEP P7025.13]

Professor Weston Bate OAM was a long-standing honorary member and valued friend to our Society. At the mid-year lunch in 2013 I told him about the History Competition I was organising for students from local schools. The project excited him and he was keen to be involved. When our sub-committee had selected the major prize-winners, I sent him copies of their submissions. Not only did he confirm our selection but offered to present a copy of his poetry book, the Haphazard Quilt to each of the girls who had submitted prizewinning poems. We were honoured to have him with us at the prize-giving to distribute the main prizes and his own books. His words of encouragement to those young poets would have been a highlight in their lives. He will be missed.

Bergliot Dallas
The Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV) and the community History movement in Victoria is saddened by the passing of one its greatest sons, Professor Weston Bate on 31 October.

Weston Bate was born in Surrey Hills Melbourne, son of Mary Olive Akers, a Californian and Ernest Bate an English-born engineer. He attended Surrey Hills primary for three years before moving to Scotch College. He then served in the RAAF and flew Lancaster bomber missions from England.

After the war he enrolled at the University of Melbourne under a serviceman’s tertiary scholarship and was captivated by History under the tutelage of Max Crawford and his few staff. Weston began teaching at Brighton Grammar in 1949, under the headship of Philip Wilson his future father-in-law. taking teacher training classes each afternoon. He began a part time MA in 1950, while teaching. His marriage to life-long partner Janice Wilson in 1955, and their four of six children being born before 1962, delayed the MA. It then became the ground breaking *A History of Brighton* (1962, 1983).

After fifteen years of teaching at Brighton Grammar and Melbourne Grammar, Weston was appointed to the History Department at the University of Melbourne, where he became a passionate and captivating lecturer. He became Professor of Australian Studies at Deakin University in 1978 before retiring in 1989.

If his *History of Brighton* set new standards in local history, *Lucky City* (1978) and his second volume of Ballarat’s history, *Life After Gold* (1993) set new heights in goldfields community history. This writing assisted the creation of Sovereign Hill, which honours him with the Weston Bate annual lecture.
In retirement he wrote histories of Geelong and Melbourne Grammar, of the Metropolitan and Barwon Heads golf clubs (for he was a skilled player into his nineties), a wonderful book on Melbourne laneways and other publications. He also published a chat book of love poems to the Mornington Peninsula, *Haphazard Quilt* (2006).

Weston Bate served on the Museum Advisory Board in the 1980s. He was a long-serving member of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and was awarded a fellowship of the Society in 1991. Weston served on the RHSV Council for fifteen years from 1990 and as President of the RHSV from 1991-97 and 2002-05. His greatest gift was to energise all those he met and to inspire historical societies across the state to pursue history with more skill, passion and tenacity.

The RHSV sends its deepest sympathy to his wife Janice Bate, their children James, Rosemary, Tristan, Nicholas, Lindon and Christopher, their partners and their families. His last days were spent peacefully at Cabrini Prahran with close friends and his much loved and loving family by his side. A passionate lifeforce finally quelled.

Professor Richard Broome

*Reproduced with the permission of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria*
HAROLD EDWARD HOLT [1908-1967]

December 17th marks 50 years since Prime Minister Harold Holt’s disappearance. The Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association’s Flotilla One was the first rescue squad to arrive at Point Nepean, at first unaware who the missing swimmer was.

Here is an eye witness report by Alan Wragg, Training Officer and Diving, made available to us by new member Peter Swan OAM, long serving member of the Association. It was first published in their magazine.

The Service was founded in 1961. Flotilla One (of currently 19 in Victoria, all voluntary) is still based in Frankston. These days the State Government Water Police respond to all calls for rescue assistance, but allocate jobs to the Volunteer Coastguard groups.

It was fascinating to share Peter’s memories of December 1967 and the work of the Volunteer Coast Guards.

Joy Kitch

A PERSONAL ACCOUNT OF THE SEARCH
FOR MR. HAROLD HOLT, P.M.

Sunday, December the 17th 1967, was one of those beautiful calm clear days when one wonders how Port Phillip could be anything but a serene, landlocked waterway.

The time was 1235 hrs approximately and Hans Schwob, Pat Briscoe, and myself had just returned to base after warning some water skiers of shark sightings near Seaford. At 1240 hrs Hans's boat radio monitored a call from 'Miss Ampol' the Elwood LifeSaving Club boat, requesting a craft to proceed to Portsea back beach where a skin diver was missing. He replied that our diving section was available and would go there by car. At 1245 the following volunteers were ready to go: Commander Horrie Rieger, Hans Schwab, Alan Oscar, Gerry Davenport, Paul Rieger and myself.
With a police escort arranged by Alan Oscar and rendezvoused at Frankston Police Station at 1255, the journey to Portsea took 35 minutes. We arrived at the Quarantine Station, whose gates were open. It was here we were told the skin diver had been missing for more than one hour. We drove down the road to the back beach track, unloaded diving equipment and walked down the path toward the ocean. Cheviot Beach is not visible at first and when it came into view the sea was totally different from Port Phillip. Large waves with an average height of 15 feet (4.6m) were smashing their way into the rocks, causing a turbulent seething mass of cross currents and rips. Some way further down we could see people on the beach and assumed this would be the search area. The only people there proved to be three or four young men from the Officer Cadet School at Portsea and two young life-savers from the surf club. They informed us that it was the Prime Minister who had been swimming and was now missing. Due to the lack of people and activity, also the enormity of the seas, I for one was a trifle sceptical about this statement. We were, however, duty bound to fully investigate and search the area.

Meanwhile the various authorities were gathering their personnel and equipment to participate in the search. We discovered later, when he arrived, that Barry Davis of Flotilla One had followed up our operation and notified the pilots at Tyabb. After discussing the situation and because others had begun to arrive at the beach, we now realised someone was in the water, but no confirmation of identity was made. It was decided to obtain a helicopter to try to assist in search operations. Alan Oscar and Gerry Davenport then wrote in the sand in 20ft (6m) high letters 'CALL HELICOPTER' as a signal to the planes.

A difficult decision then had to be made as to the advisability of entering the water to search the area. At this stage the surge and enormous swells which were turning the gullies into masses of boiling white water with rushing undertows, made this impossible. I therefore flatly refused requests by my section to allow them in at this time. We waited and together planned a search pattern, knowing that as the tide receded, the natural rock ledges would absorb some of the power in the waves.
A helicopter arrived at about 1500 hrs with a police Superintendent aboard, who confirmed that the missing person was the Prime Minister who was not skindiving but had gone swimming. Others began to congregate on the beach, namely the St.John Ambulance, Civil Defence and Army personnel, Police and volunteers. The police Search and Rescue Squad arrived by helicopter and they too discussed the advisability of not diving. There was still a dangerous surge running when, after making sure all adequate safety precautions were in order we entered the water. Using extreme caution coupled with experience an area could be searched.

At first snorkels were tried using a surf reel and belt with myself on the belt and Horrie Rieger approx. 30 ft. (9 m) from the beach. This technique, however, proved fruitless due to practically zero visibility under water and currents making any kind of controlled movement virtually impossible. We abandoned this in favour of SCUBA equipment and Horrie Rieger and I in full SCUBA entered the water. The invaluable service of experienced divers Alan Oscar and Hans Schwob at the surface controlling the line and keeping it clear of obstructions certainly saved us from coming to grief. The conditions on the bottom were very turbulent and both Horrie and I were being thrown around as if, to quote Alan Oscar, we were "in a washing machine". After approximately one and a half hours of searching, with our air supplies at critical level, and exhaustion taking its toll, we returned to the shore. The nature of this area was such that in our personal opinion, even a most competent swimmer could not survive for very long.

What followed after, we all know, is tragically historic.

One incident that took place during the search was the dramatic and heroic rescue of two men of the crew of a capsized boat, by a helicopter pilot. The pilot of the helicopter risked his life twice to accomplish this, and it was the most skilful and bravest act I have ever witnessed.
The spirit of co-operation involved was illustrated by the Sorrento Fire Brigade who provided food, warm clothing and even packets of cigarettes for searchers. The Army provided the inevitable army brew and even had a Major serving it out. The police divers discussed the situation, took and offered advice to us on the diving aspects. In summing up my personal observations, I cannot speak too highly of the men who volunteered for this emergency.

To the members of Flotilla One, who were present at Cheviot Beach on that fateful day, I would say their conduct was of the highest order and their efforts upheld the finest tradition of the Coast Guard. We were the first organised body on the scene and our divers the first to enter the water.

It is the actions of men such as Horrie Rieger, Alan Oscar, Gerry Davenport, Hans Schwob, Barry Davis and Paul Rieger, in their attitude and demeanour in time of adversity, such as this was, which make me proud to associate with them and to be a member of this organisation.

ALAN WRAGG, Training Officer and Diving Section Leader Flotilla One
Frankston - Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association (First published in Coast Guard National Magazine. Slight editing due to space demands.)

Photo: Harold Holt 1957.
Public Domain, Wikipedia
**MUSEUM NEWS**

**My Culture, My Story.**

As part of the National Trust Heritage festival in April next year, whose overall theme is multicultural, we are planning an exhibition of photographs and memorabilia to showcase and celebrate the diversity of cultures that have shaped our shared heritage on the Southern Mornington Peninsula. At first count, we identified 14 different nationalities among past residents.

Do you have a relevant story to share about your family background? We welcome contributions to this exhibition.

Please contact Bergliot Dallas, Joy Kitch or Janet South through admin@nhs.asn.au or Tel. 5984 0255 (leave a message)

**MEMBERSHIP**

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

Maxine Carter, Brian O’Neill, and Peter Swan

Thanks to members who have already renewed their subscription. Please notify us if you haven’t received a renewal notice.

Val Steiglbauer
Membership Secretary
VOLUNTEERS
Museum Volunteer Duty Roster

A heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers who willingly give up three hours of their weekend several times a year to welcome our visitors to the museum.

Those on duty find they meet some very interesting people, and also gain more insight into our wonderful collection. You don’t need to know a lot, as queries can be passed on to those who do, or followed up with research. There are always two people on duty, and newcomers are rostered with more experienced people.

We encourage any new members, and others who may now have time to spare, to phone 5984 0255 and join the team.

Annette Buckland
Museum Roster Co-ordinator

PROMOTIONAL STREET STALLS

Stalls income September to November totalled $1135 in Sorrento, $1434 in Blairgowrie. Along with our books we have a good selection of well-priced quality merchandise that would make excellent Christmas presents for your friends and family, particularly if you want light-weight Australiana gifts to post or take overseas.

Forthcoming stall dates listed in Coming Events p.19

Suzanne Edginton and Jan Weston
RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE LIBRARY

*The Man Who Carried the Nation’s Grief.*

For those of you who missed Carol Rosenhain’s [pictured left] terrific presentation at NHS in November may I suggest you buy the book?

James Lean and his Base Records Office in Melbourne offered anxious families of the thousands of WW1 soldiers more than just information. The extraordinary compassion, concern and efforts to track soldiers are revealed in the letters from Lean selected by Carol.

Through this moving book we learn much about the men who joined and the voices and stories of those left at home.

Some men took the opportunity to leave unhappy lives and over 7,000 joined under assumed names. Deciding which family member should receive medals became an issue sometimes.

This precious and fascinating story of the marvellous Major Lean would make a wonderful TV series.

See website for more book details: [www.nepeanhistoricalsociety.asn.au](http://www.nepeanhistoricalsociety.asn.au)

Joy Kitch
COMING EVENTS

Our meetings are held on the first Friday of the month at 8pm in the Sorrento Museum, Mechanics’ Institute
Corner of Melbourne & Ocean Beach Roads Sorrento
Free and open to all - Tea or Coffee afterwards by donation
You are welcome to join us for dinner prior to meetings at 6.15pm at Sorrento-Portsea RSL, 1-33 Hurley Street, Sorrento [off George Street]

Saturday 23rd December 9am - 12pm
Street Stall at Blairgowrie.

Saturday 6th January 9am - 12pm
Street Stall at Blairgowrie

Saturday 20th January 9am - 12pm
Street Stall at Sorrento

Saturday 21st January 9am - 3pm
Pt Nepean Portsea Market

Friday 26 January 2018 Australia Day Luncheon
Rye Hotel with Rye Historical Society

Friday 2nd February at 8 pm Monthly Meeting
Speaker to be announced.

Saturday 3rd February 9am - 12pm
Street Stall at Sorrento

Saturday 17th February 9am - 12pm
Street Stall at Blairgowrie

Saturday 10th March 9am - 12pm
Street Stall at Blairgowrie

Friday 2nd March at 8 pm Monthly Meeting
Speaker to be announced.
NEPEAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Office Bearers of the Society 2017-2018

PRESIDENT: Clive Smith

VICE-PRESIDENT: Joy Kitch

SECRETARY: Val Stieglbauer

ARCHIVIST: Janet South

COLLECTION & DISPLAY COORDINATOR: Joy Kitch

TREASURER: TBC

COMMITTEE: Annette Buckland, Marie Clark,
Anna Hackwill, Jenny Nixon, Natasha Wicks

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.