

WHITTLESEA HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

ABN 46019570463

There has been a lot of action in the Whittlesea area regarding archaeology especially about the site of the former Moses Thomas Flour Mill in Mernda. It is not often that there are archaeological digs in the suburbs and for those who were not able to get along to the Open day this report will be of interest.

OPEN ARCHAEOLOGY DAY

By Wendy Lowry

Heritage Victoria undertook the dig on the flour mill site to discover the remains of the adjacent house next to the Mill which operated from 1855 to 1863 on the Plenty River. The Moses Thomas mill was the largest of a series built along the Plenty River to provide flour during the gold rush. However these mills were to have short lives as it coincided at the time of the building of Yan Yean Reservoir. This construction slowed the water flow of the river which then made the mills unviable.

During the excavation students from the local South Morang Primary and Mill Park Secondary schools had the opportunity to participate alongside the State's historical archaeology team.

There were over 600 objects found from inside and outside the house remains. These artefacts also included the remains of Aboriginal sites along the river. Some of these items were given to the schools and the City of Whittlesea while others will be conserved by Heritage Victoria. You can see these items in The Council offices main reception inside the glass cabinets

There is talk of further Heritage Victoria work along the Plenty River around the site of the original Bridge Inn Hotel. We will have to wait and see as this could in time become an extensive historical precinct.

NEWSLETTER Number 22 October 2015

Editor Wendy Lowry

*This Newsletter is kindly printed
by the office of Andrew Giles MP
(Federal Member for Scullin)*

The Open Day enabled people from the local community to come and view the results of the dig and look at the excavation site. The people from Heritage Victoria were there to explain the different facets of the dig and also show the items that had been found. Parks Victoria were on hand as the site of the dig is now within the boundary of the Plenty Gorge Park.



Here are some of the items found.



WHERE DID THAT COME FROM?

"Saved by the bell"

This is a boxing term thought to date from the 1930's. A floored contestant being counted out might be saved by the ringing of the bell marking the end of the round, giving him the three minute break between rounds to recover.

However there is another more gruesome theory for this phrase that people might not be aware of. When graveyards became overcrowded in the eighteenth century, coffins were dug up, bones disposed of and the graves were reused. In opening the coffins many were found to have scratch marks on the inside indicating that people must have been buried alive.

In order to guard against this occurrence, a string was tied to the wrist of the corpse and went from the coffin up through the ground where it was tied to a bell. Someone would have to sit in the graveyard all night to listen for the bell, hence the phrase *"saved by the bell"*.

From this same derivation we have night workers who refer to their work from midnight to dawn as being the *"graveyard shift"*.



WHITTLESEA HERITAGE PROGRAM 2015

Don't miss out on these wonderful events that are being offered in this year's Heritage program. Be a part of the historical information that is being shared about our community within the City of Whittlesea.

YAN YEAN CEMETERY TOUR

Presented by the Whittlesea Historical Society

Date : Sunday October 4th
Where : Yan Yean Cemetery
Plenty Road, Yan Yean.
(Mel Ref 246 E12)
Time: 2pm. - 4pm.
Cost : Free
Book: Online at www.whittlesea.gov.au

ZIEBELL'S FARMHOUSE OPEN DAY

Presented by the Friends of Westgarthtown

Date: Sunday 4th October
Where: Pioneer Precinct
German Lane, Lalor.
(Mel Ref 8 H5)
Time: 10am. - 4pm.
Cost: Free

CITY OF WHITTLESEA HISTORICAL TOUR

Presented by Yarra Plenty Regional Library

Date : Sunday 11th October
Where: Bus tours will depart and return from
Mill Park Library.
394 Plenty Road, Mill Park.
(Mel Ref 10 C2)
Time: 10.30am - 12.30pm.
1.30pm - 3.30pm
Cost: Free Bookings essential.
Book: www.yprl.vic.gov.au

BEAR'S CASTLE TOURS

Presented by the Whittlesea Courthouse Visitor Information Centre supported by Melbourne Water.

Date : Saturday 17th October
Where : Bus tours depart Whittlesea
Courthouse Visitor Centre
Corner Church and Beech Streets
Whittlesea
(Mel Ref 246 G8)
Time : 10am & 2pm sharp
Cost : \$25 per person
Book : Nesta Russell 97161866

WHITTLESEA TOWNSHIP'S CHURCHES TOUR

Presented by the Whittlesea Historical Society

Date : Sunday 18th October
Where : Tours will depart from Whittlesea
Uniting Church,
26 Forest Street, Whittlesea.
(Mel Ref 246 G8)
Time : 2pm - 4.30pm
Cost : \$5 per person
Book : Online at www.whittlesea.gov.au
or phone 9217 2174.

YARRA PLENTY REGIONAL LIBRARIES

OCTOBER is Local History Month at Yarra Plenty Regional Libraries.

From Sunday 18th October to Sunday 25th October there will be 25 programs over the nine libraries within the Yarra Plenty Region. Within our area we have Mill Park, Thomastown, Lalor and Whittlesea libraries.

Topics include History of the local community, conservation of History, Genealogy sources and talks with local historians on how to preserve our history.

Check all the events online at -
www.yprl.vic.gov.au

WHITTLESEA SHOWGROUNDS SCULPTURE

To commemorate the 150 years of the Whittlesea Agricultural Show in 2009, it was decided to commission a sculpture to be made and erected on the Showgrounds site to reflect the rich agricultural history of the Whittlesea District and the Plenty Valley. This commission was awarded to Mr Geoff Hocking of Castlemaine, Victoria.

At the end of May this year the sculpture was finally erected and unveiled. The sculpture represents successful farming depicted in the achievement of the Grand Parade.



Below is an excerpt from Judith Clement's speech at the launch where she provided a short history of the farming in the district.

"It was 1836, when Gellibrand and his party explored this area and wrote- 'We continued our course about 8 miles over fine feeding land and came upon a rapid stream of water flowing from the north to the south, We called this river the River Plenty as it is the only stream except the Barwon deserving of the name of River'

By 1837, settlement of the Plenty Valley had begun. George Sherwin built a hut beside the Plenty River on what is now the Whittlesea township reserve. The fertility of the valley and its reputation of an unfailing water supply, saw a wide range of farming activities pursued including dairy, cattle and sheep for meat and wool, grain, fruit and vegetables and also vineyards.

It stands to reason that a productive district led by progressive farmers would be the driving force behind the first Whittlesea Fair in 1859. From this beginning came the Whittlesea Show as we know it today over 150 years later. Throughout this time it has maintained a high standard of produce, livestock and exhibits."



Check out the sculpture this November when you head out to the Whittlesea Agricultural Show.

ODD SPOT

Courtesy of Gwen Hawke

Newspaper Article from the ARGUS
Thursday 27th March 1856

LADIES' BOARDING SCHOOL

Whittlesea, Upper Plenty, conducted by **Mrs. LATHAM** and **Miss KENT**.

The above School will be opened on the 1st of April next. The premises are large and commodious and situated in a most healthy and picturesque part of the country, distant twenty-five miles from Melbourne and within two miles of the Yan Yean Reservoir.

Terms: Board and Instruction, including French and Laundress's charge, seventy guineas per annum, payable quarterly, in advance.

Extras: Piano, three guineas per quarter, Dancing, two guineas per quarter, eat in Church free.

School Requisites-silver fork and spoon, six table napkins, sheeting and towels.

References kindly permitted to the Rev. William Copeland, Dr Ronald, JP and George Sherwin, Esq, JP Whittlesea Upper Plenty.

WHAT'S IN A NAME ?

By John Waghorn

"OBSOLETE STREETS"

In the course of my researches as to how the streets in the City of Whittlesea receive their names, I have come across quite a few street names that have been changed over the years, a few that have disappeared, a few have appeared on some maps but not on others and a few are less trafficable than what the original maps show. For want of a better name I have called them "*Öbsolete Streets*".

In one instance a whole new Sub-division disappeared, along with fifteen streets which comprised the **Newton Park Estate**, near what is now the Lalor Railway Station.

Another Sub-division, **The Separation Estate** of 1852, has also had (and is continuing to have) quite a few street name changes. One that seems to have been changed unofficially was originally named **Cheapside**, but is now **Cravens Road**, mainly because no one wanted to live in Cheapside. It was changed circa 1870's when **Newell CRAVEN** was living there.

CRAVEN was born in Yorkshire, England, in Jan. 1795, married there and came to Tasmania with their five children in 1833. He became dissatisfied there and moved to Victoria where he first leased the "**Tollerton Forest**" Run of 2,000 acres in the Plenty Ranges. By 1863 he had purchased a House and ten acres in the **Separation Estate** for 58 Pounds.

Did You Know This Interesting Fact?

There are now more than four and half thousand Streets within the City of Whittlesea and increasing at the rate of one hundred new streets each year.

VALE

FAYE THOMAS 1942 -2015

Faye Thomas was a Descendant of Moses Thomas, the Pioneer settler in Mernda who owned the Thomas Mill.

She was a teacher and educator for many years and gave a wonderful presentation at the AGM of the Whittlesea Historical Society back in 2008 regarding her family heritage.

She was a great resource to the Society and to the local community.

GRAVESTONES

By Wendy Lowry

Part of any genealogist's mission is to discover where their ancestors died and where they were buried. Having recently returned from England on a family history research trip, it is evident when looking through the old churchyards and cemeteries that a lot of the important inscriptions are unfortunately being eroded and lost.

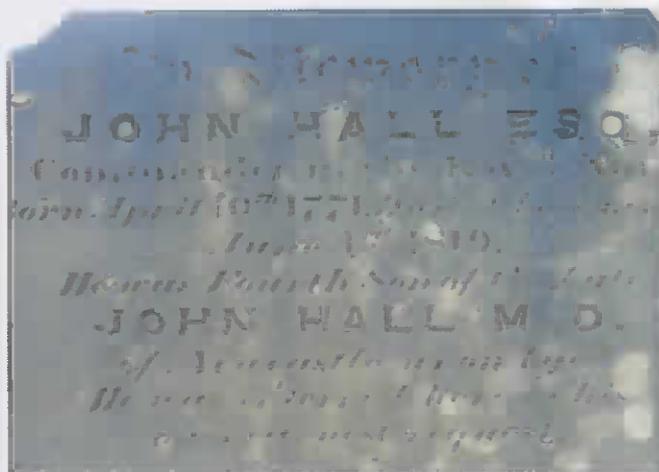
There will be a time perhaps, that they will disappear altogether. Information found on the gravestones is invaluable to the family historian. Not only is the death date and age present but sometimes the birthplace is mentioned along with details of other family members who are buried in the same plot. One must also keep in mind that the gravestones were erected by families who did have a reasonable amount of money to do so.

Historically gravestones and for that matter, tombstones, were the stone slabs placed over the grave site. Headstones were markers placed at the head of the grave and footstones were markers placed at the foot of the grave. Most headstones were made from one of three materials- sandstone, marble and granite.

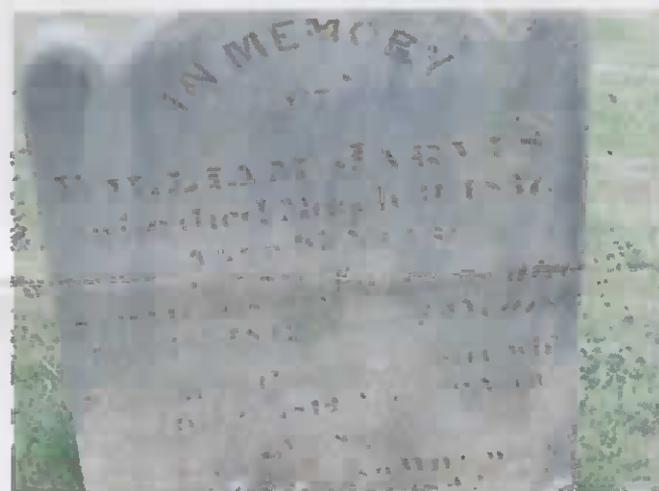
Stonemasons found the sandstone easy to carve but it weathers poorly, while the marble is good to carve it is but prone to cracking in extreme conditions. Granite is the hardest and long lasting. Later in the 20th century, lead lettering appeared on the headstones which at least made the inscription stand out. More recently we see gold painted lettering on granite along with ceramic photos of the deceased.

Unlike in England where most of the old cemeteries are in the grounds of the Church, in Australia we see cemeteries located away from the church on the outskirts of towns. We have some lovely cemeteries in the Whittlesea District - Yan Yean, Epping, Donnybrook and Arthur's Creek.

Here are some photos of headstones in England from my recent trip. It is incredible to think these two headstones were next to each other in the cemetery at Tynemouth, Northumberland by the coast.



Here is one from Norfolk also by the coast.



What also strikes you as you walk through these old churchyards is that there are still headstones visible from early mid 18th century. That is before Australia was even discovered by Captain Cook. There are other headstones that are unreadable, their information lost in time. This leads me to perhaps suggest that the Historical Society set themselves a project of transcribing the existing headstones at the old cemeteries within the City of Whittlesea in order to keep a record of those who have contributed to our community.