Kalamunda & Districts Historical Society Inc

The Bulletin

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The Saw Pit being repaired. Note the crane in the background

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Open: Sunday 11am to 1pm
Closed January

Presidents Report

PRESIDENT'S REPORT Summer 2024

Dear Colleagues, this is my final Bulletin report for 2024. In the spring Bulletin I outlined the President's report to the AGM which was a comprehensive overview of the year's activities. In the months since then we have all continued our activities in the Village and within the Society.

Visitor numbers have continued to increase, and it is interesting to read comments in the Visitors Book to see how many people come from overseas. A recent survey carried out by the Visitor Centre shows how important our website is in attracting visitors. We are now posting regularly on Facebook and Instagram too.

Presentations and outings have continued with a most interesting talk given by Peter Watson about our photo collection now numbering 10,000 plus. We have outreach into the business community providing photos for display and the production of a calendar. A visit to our member Gordon Freegard to view his amazing sewing machine collection was most enjoyable. A talk on the work done in the Lesmurdie Falls area was very informative. The final railway sign at Canning Mills was unveiled bringing to an end this project and thanks to Beverly Giumelli and the Pickering Brook Heritage group for their work and hospitality out at Canning Mills.

Our final event for the year was the Christmas Party held on December 5. As usual the wind kept us company, but the evening was very successful and most enjoyable. Thank you so much to all those who worked to put this together – too many names to mention!

We look forward to 2025 and please save the date Sunday afternoon April 6 when we will celebrate 100 years of the Kostera family business in Kalamunda.

In conclusion thank you all for your support over the past year and a special thank you to all our volunteers and our staff. I would just like to acknowledge Paula Wilkins our Bulletin editor, just one of the 'caps she wears'. Thank you, Paula, for all the work this involves.

Compliments of the Season to you all and enjoy this holiday period.

Jenny Lewis

Calling all Hungarian residents

within the City of Kalamunda, of Hungarian descent.

A recent trip to eastern Europe was fascinating, countries like Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, eastern parts of Germany, Czech Republic and Austria. We, well-heeled, freedom-loving tourists, learned of the recent histories of all these countries. Their large, proud Austro-Hungarian Empire was in ruins by the end of World War One. Then came the Depression and World War Two in which there were truly appalling losses, of people and of property.

To top it off, as the end of the War approached, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, U.S. President Truman, when meeting with Russian President Stalin, agreed that the Soviets would have control of all these nations in the Post War period. And so began a period of considerable oppression.

Unsurprisingly, each of these countries over subsequent years attempted to resist the oppression. (Think of east and west Berlin!)

In 1956, many youthful Hungarians, desperate for freedom, erupted into street fighting in Budapest, and beyond. Soviet forces quickly poured in and brutally put down the uprising by November of the same year. Many Hungarians were killed or imprisoned. Others, with the threat of torture or likely imprisonment, fled. Some to as far away as Australia!

So, who are these people who perhaps fled in the 1950s?

An intrepid group of **Hungarian nuns** were, perhaps, doubly unlucky: they had reportedly fled from China after Mao Zedong and Communism took over in 1949. Returning home to Soviet-controlled Hungary maybe was not an option. We don't know. We do know that, arriving here in Australia in about 1955, they were soon active in the Lesmurdie community. In 1961 they were mentioned when the aged care facility, Villa Maria, was officially opened by Archbishop Prendiville. They were also given the task of establishing the Our Lady of Grace Convent School in Pickering Brook. This they successfully did in the early 1960s. Underneath their conservative, constricting black habits there was clearly a group of very formidable women!

Members of the Kalamunda Uniting Church have another story involving the clergy: in 1988 **Rev. Attila Balla** took up a position here as a minister of religion. Long-term members of the church remember Attila sharing his extraordinary story of escaping from Hungary as a teenager, with his brother, after having been involved in the 1956 Hungarian Uprising. Speaking very little English, he was nevertheless able to work and then study Theology, Philosophy, History and Psychology. He came to Kalamunda, full of energy I recall, after serving the church in Victoria and then in Tom Price in the West.

The **Annus Family,** another family of immigrants has been well-acknowledged for their assistance to fellow-Hungarians. Peter Annus has a park named for him in High Wycombe. His story is told by his son Tibor and goes like this…. when the Russians invaded Hungary in 1945, at the completion of the war, they were arresting all the gendarmes and other authority figures and were executing them or sending them to work camps. Peter Annus had worked as a community gendarme, so his future was dire. Peter and his wife Gizella escaped to nearby Austria which was neutral. However, there were refugees everywhere in post-war Austria so an offer was made such that they could leave Europe and go either to America or Australia. With no real choice, they arrived in Western Australia in1950.

Calling all Hungarian residents

After a period of time in the Northam Camp for Gizella and baby Tibor (during which time Peter was sent to wherever workers were needed, including a stint in Perth's sewers), they moved to live with Hungarian friends in Carmel/Piesse Brook for a year or two. These friends were **Karoly and Edith Otvos** in Aldersyde Road and then the **Borros family**. Both families had children, and space was very limited but that generous sharing by fellow Hungarians was crucial. And then in 1953 Peter Annus was able to buy four acres in Maida Vale (later High Wycombe). He built a very small, basic house for his family and they managed amidst a high level of deprivation. (Tibor describes this in detail in his Oral History). But the important thing was that the family was together and in a safe country! A second much larger brick and tile followed quite a few years later.

Tibor remembers how important the Hungarian community was to the family. As a young lad he was a member of the Hungarian Scouts, the Hungarian Club which the family attended, and special occasions run by the Hungarian nuns in a Lesmurdie nursing home (now Villa Maria). They also attended a Hungarian Mass each week in Highgate, later in the Smiths' orchard packing shed in Maida Vale Road where a priest officiated in very makeshift conditions.

The citation given recognizing the work of Peter Annus says "[he] was an early landowner/settler in High Wycombe. He established an orchard, and the Peter Annus Reserve came from when the orchard was subdivided. He was involved in the Orchardists Association, active in the local church, scouts, dance groups and assisted fellow Hungarian immigrants in the area." The family was gradually learning how to fit in with their new country while retaining their Hungarian traditions, those things which continued to be dear to them. (It is noted that that Australian – Hungarian Association still operates actively).

Karoly Otvos stayed in the area for many years and died in Bickley in 1990 aged 70.

It is also noted that members of the Boros/Borros family are still in the area and run a successful earthmoving business with a Forrestfield address.

Peter Annus died in 1995 aged 85, his wife Gizella died in 2005 aged 84.

(NB For the full oral history of Peter's son Tibor Annus, see online Tibor Annus : Life in High Wycombe.)

The **Szijarto family** came to live in Carmel in the 1950s. Paul and Rosa were the parents, their children Inge, Rosemary, Crystal (Chris) and twins Paul and Anneliese. The parents and the older children had come from Austria previously in 1950 although the father, Paul, was actually Hungarian. Initially, they lived in the Northam camp and the first job Paul had was working on the raising of the wall of the Mundaring Weir. Commuting from Northam to Mundaring by bicycle was very difficult but the work was finally completed in November 1951, after which Paul worked for the Forestry Department. Rosalie remembers living in the little timber settlement of Carinyah near Pickering Brook. Their home was a "sort-of log cabin". She also remembers starting kindergarten there. Her mother, Rosa, struggled to learn English as did many migrant women.

Later, about 1953, the family worked on the Annetts' orchard in Carmel Road and lived in the Annetts' small weatherboard house which is still there close to the road. Later, they built their own house close by on Canning Road, very close to the Carmel Road turn-off. That area was, and still is, a beautiful, peaceful part of the world in which anything was possible with hard work. As with the Annus family, whom they knew well, their Catholic faith meant a great deal to them, and this is

remembered. Both parents had long lives, Paul dying in 2015 aged 89 and Rosa dying in Carmel in 2018 aged 92.

There are undoubtedly other local people who are from a Hungarian background, like **Eva Munns** who remembers walking through the snow to escape to neutral Austria, and who found refuge in Australia.

Maybe you know of other people with a similar story?

National Servicemen (Nashos) and the Vietnam War

(John Paskulich. Served South Vietnam 1971)

This is my attempt to explain the "Nasho" system that I was subjected to those many years ago. Most Australians were not born at the time of the Vietnam War so it is probably a good time to apprise the newer generations of what happened and dispel some flawed beliefs among many of the older generations.

Overview

Australia committed itself to support the USA in the Vietnam War (1962-75). I have no interest in debating that decision; it would occupy a lot more than these few pages. The Indonesian Confrontation "'*Konfrontasi"* of 1963-66 also posed a significant threat to Australian interests. Australia's regular army of the time was far too small to cope, so the Menzies' Liberal government implemented the (4th) National Service (military conscription) scheme in November 1964 and the first intake called-up in mid-1965. Nashos were posted to units in Vietnam, Borneo, Malaysia, New Guinea and Singapore but a large proportion remained in Australia.

All 20-year-old men who were Australian citizens or residents were required to register but indigenous men were exempted. The selection method was a ***ballot based on their birthdays***. From NAA resources (below): *Numbered marbles, each representing a day of the year, were placed in a barrel. A predetermined number were then drawn individually and randomly by hand. If the number picked corresponded to the day of the year on which a person was born, they were required to present themselves for national service. Men chosen by this ballot had to perform 2 years continuous full-time service in the Australian Regular Army. This could include overseas service in Vietnam. After their full-time service, they were required to serve for 3 1/2 years part time. This method of selection was widely regarded as unfair and strengthened opposition to conscription.*

In my experience, Nashos were not required to present themselves for the abovementioned part-time service at the end of their full-time service, but their movements were restricted and,

theoretically, they were available to be recalled. The two-year term was progressively reduced to 18 months from late 1971.

Between 1964 and 1972, ***804286 were eligible*** for national service but only ***63735*** Nashos ***served*** (only in the Army - no other services). Less than ***8%*** who registered actually served and less than a quarter of those (<***2%***) were sent to war. There are conflicting figures published by various organisations on numbers of personnel, casualties etc. but the ones I quote closely follow Australian War Museum and Dept of Veterans Affairs (DVA) information.

The voting age was 21 and only dropped to 18 in 1973 - after the Whitlam Labor Government ended National Service upon its election in December 1972. All the young men required to register were denied the vote and never had the political opportunity to challenge the legislation that enabled their government to send them to a foreign war.

As an aside, the Whitlam and subsequent Labor governments claimed they ended Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. In reality, Australia's last hostile action was the ***Nui Le*** battle (21 Sep. 1971) and the McMahon Liberal government had already withdrawn some combat units by then and the remainder by mid-March 1972. All that remained after March 1972 were some advisors and the embassy defense platoon and they were also gradually withdrawn. The last six personnel left in June 1973.
Furthermore, during the Whitlam government, there was also a brief period of RAAF incursions in early 1975, performing evacuations and delivering humanitarian supplies. This was just prior to South Vietnam's defeat by the North.
There were several prior conscription schemes in Australia but, in all previous wars, Australian conscripts were not allowed on foreign battlefields (Australian defence only). Conscripts fought in Papua New Guinea in WW2 but PNG was then an Australian territory and the 39th Militia (conscript) Battalion was the first available to confront the Japanese at Kokoda. Australian servicemen in Africa and Europe in WW1 and WW2 and other foreign conflicts prior to the 1960s were all volunteers in the regular forces.
Records compiled between 1967 and 1970 show the medical failure rate was >50% so this implies that roughly, 130 000 were actually selected in the ballot to achieve 63 735. This fits with a comment by a speaker at a DVA talk I attended, around the year 2000, about veterans having higher cancer rates but also higher survival rates than average. ***"You were just better to start with!"***

Approximately 15300 Nashos served in the Vietnam War with over 200 killed (1.3%) and 1279 other casualties (8.4%)

A total of about 60000 Australians served in Vietnam; 521 killed; approx. 3000 other casualties.

National Servicemen (Nashos) and the Vietnam War

Nashos had much higher casualties pro rata, than regular service personnel; almost 10% of Nashos compared to < 5% regulars. This is because a large proportion of Nashos were low ranking soldiers assigned to front-line army combat units such as infantry, artillery, armoured

National Servicemen (Nashos) and the Vietnam War

corps and engineers and they were more likely to be in harm's way. This is not a reflection of similar regular combat soldiers but the fact that many low-risk personnel were regulars. All naval and air force and most army personnel above the rank of Corporal were regulars.

From a Vietnam Veterans Family Study (DVA resource below): *Australian research shows that 43 years after the Vietnam War, 69.7 per cent of 60,228 Vietnam veterans had at least one government- accepted disability associated with the war and many had multiple disabilities (Clark, Gregory, & Salomon, 2015). The main types of disabilities were eye and ear disorders (48.0 per cent), mental health conditions (47.9 per cent), and musculoskeletal disorders (18.4 per cent).*

My opinion and observations

Nashos were the Vietnam "gun fodder" needed to meet the political ends of the Menzies' and subsequent Liberal governments of the time. The term "gun fodder" is illustrated by the fact that Nashos comprised around 25% of personnel but suffered over 40% of total casualties.

A fallacious story exists that all National Servicemen sent to Vietnam were enthusiastic volunteers. To quote the following Australian War Museum documentation that refutes this: *National servicemen on full-time duty were liable for what was called 'special overseas service', which included combat duties in Vietnam*.

My personal experience was that better quality recruits were simply assigned to Vietnam-bound units without consultation. After training with their units, and just prior to embarkation, they were presented with a raft of documents to sign including a volunteer form. Few 20-year-olds would want to let their mates down or, worse, be labelled cowardly and most went along with it, but probably not enthusiastically. It was a clever strategy. The government and army could then claim it was a fully volunteer force. I remember one Nasho in my unit who refused to sign the volunteer document, and he was strongly criticised and swiftly re-posted.
A comment from the DVA Anzac portal website, listed below, that also clearly dispels this furphy: *The Battle of Nui Le, the last battle to involve Australian troops, took place in September 1971. Four days later, Minister for the Army, Andrew Peacock, announced no national servicemen would be required to go to Vietnam if they did not want to go.*

Four of the five soldiers killed that day in September were Nashos.

National Servicemen (Nashos) and the Vietnam War

There was also a scheme of volunteer national service (VNS) available. Individuals could apply to join the regular army under National Service conditions, i.e. a two-year term rather than the usual minimum of three years. Aboriginal men were exempt but could also volunteer under this scheme and I met several during my service. I suspect VNS fueled the fallacy about Nashos keenly volunteering for Vietnam. An alternative arrangement also existed. If individuals voluntarily joined the CMF (part-time reserves) ***prior to registration*** they could gain an exemption from the call-up. I think this scheme was often abused and some did not complete their obligation.

In the latter part of the 20th C, veteran Nashos were probably the most harshly treated cohort in Australia. Other disadvantaged groups were seeing major improvements in their lots, but these veterans were a small, targeted, group of young men who had their lives disrupted, often exposed to mortal danger, often left with disabilities and, worst of all, vilified or marginalised by many in broader Australian society, both during their service and after returning home from the war.

Some personal memories to illustrate the last point above:

- As a new Nasho recruit, on guard, I was armed with a baton at North Head Artillery School in 1970 for defence against expected protestor violence.
- On the dating scene soon after coming home from the war, I once copped ***"I don't date veterans, they're psycho"*** and another suggesting we were ***"baby killers".***
- As a young married in the mid-1970s, debating mortgage interest rates with other couples, I received the comment ***"but you're LUCKY, you have a War Service loan"***. It was a once-only, non-transferable LOAN of $9000 at a discounted 3.75% p.a. interest (which did not even compensate for lost wages during service). This was at a time when an average cottage cost around $20000 and a good wage was about $7000 p.a. Is the irony obvious?
- My favourite: ***"it was only a police action"***. I was attached to 4RAR (infantry battalion) in 1971. We had similar casualties to my Dad's 16th Battalion in Darwin and New Britain in WW2, except ours were in 5 months, theirs in 3 years!

Supporting references

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ED's Note: Please note that this article contains John's *opinions,* as well as the facts, well researched. No discussion will be entered into.

Success Triumphs Over Adversity

We readers of the Bulletin are generally old enough and wise enough to recognize that real adversity can, and often is, able to be overcome. New beginnings are possible!
When Carmel Ballinger recently spoke to K&DHS members about the Lesmurdie Falls, known as Jerrabinyan by the original inhabitants, after briefly outlining what we know of how the original indigenous people lived there, she moved on to tell us about the Manning family.

John Daniel Manning (1847-1916) took up a 1000 -acre homestead grant around the falls with the aim of running his dairy cows there, specifically rearing young heifers. His family actually lived in South Perth but his son (who had the wonderful name Charles Haddon Spurgeon Manning), remembers delightful visits there for picnics at the base of the falls amidst an amazing array of colourful wildflowers, *a lovely spectacle.*
But of course, many other picnickers and wildflower enthusiasts also wanted the same pleasure, despite *the fact that it was private property.* CHS recalls that *to get to the falls, folk had to enter Dad's property by a gate on a track leading from Wattle Grove (railway station). On one occasion the gate was left open and a number of heifers got out and grazed where the poison weed grew. Some died and Dad took the people involved to Court. These folk on a picnic had not only opened the gate but had lifted it off its hinges and used it as a bridge for the ladies to cross Yule Brook.*
The case came before Mr James Cowan, husband of well-known Edith Cowan, Australia's first woman M,P. He was a Justice of the Peace. Dad was very angry when Mr Cowan dismissed the case, because he (Cowan) said the picnickers must have some means of getting across the Brook.
A series of increasingly astonishing points arise from this story.
Firstly, we don't know all the details of the case, but the verdict does seem a bit unreasonable. No wonder *Dad was very angry.*
Secondly, it would have been most unusual for a high-status man to be identified via his wife. James Cowan was actually a Magistrate, not just a J.P. but, of course, Edith was exceptional as the first woman M.P. in Australia.
Thirdly, and most astonishingly, a quick on-line search of Edith's biography outlines the facts that her mother died suddenly when Edith was only seven years old and the little girl was packed off to boarding school. Her father seems to hardly feature in her life until, having married a second wife, he brutally murders her, is found guilty and is hanged. Edith Dircksey Brown was only 15 years old at the time this horrendous story was in newspapers all over the nation.
And yet we know that she had a most extraordinary, reforming career in Parliament and beyond. When the really hot weather comes as it will, take time to have a read for yourselves about this amazing lady. And now you know that Edith Cowan, a great survivor of trauma, even has an ever-so-tentative link to our part of the world!

Sawpit 2024 Refurbishment

The prime project of the newly formed (in 1969) Kalamunda & Districts Historical Society was to create a History Village. The site selected, and agreed by the then Shire of Kalamunda, was in the grounds that were originally Kalamunda Station for the Upper Darling Range Railway. And one of the early projects there, after acquiring the G118 steam loco and relocating the school and post office, was to create a sawpit to display the method of cutting newly felled trees into manageable sizes before mechanised mills were established in 1840.

Enter, Niel Weston, well experienced in sawmilling who, in 1978, converted the existing subterranean fuel tank pit into the sawpit we see today… well almost you see, very little maintenance had been carried out on this pit over the years until your Society arranged a refurbishment.

This was completed in July and the result will stand this facility in good stead for quite a few years to come.

The project, handled by a small group of volunteers, required the large logs to be removed, so it was planned to complete this project during school holidays without concern for the safety of school children. Dave Fortune of Fortune Cranes removed these logs and the two bearer logs to a safe place. New bearer logs were procured because the originals were showing signs of deterioration… after all they had been there for 46 years!!!

The Saw Pits new fence in 2015

Six trailer loads of coffee rock were secured for the rebuild and a good friend of the museum, Nick Metzelaar, contracted to excavate the fallen sides and rebuild in authentic fashion with rock we had procured. He did this in only a couple of days and the result is very creditable. Subsoil drainage was installed to avoid the erosion which caused the initial walls to collapse. Dave Fortune was called out again to replace the bearers and logs and he did this to an appreciative audience of school kids OUTSIDE the fence.

We took the opportunity to restore the pitsaw with new handles and a good clean-up before replacing it in situ in one of the huge logs.

Fencing around the sawpit was repaired and restored to provide safety for all.

The sawpit now looks “as good as new” but importantly, is safe from collapsing with new timbers and walling and continues to be an important part of the education program.

A good job done in a timely manner with no disruption to the education program.

Bob Rogers

A Plea from the President

Dear members

I am writing to you in regard to the Sunday roster at History Village and Stirk Cottage. We have a very healthy membership list and many active volunteers, but there is one area that we need your help with, namely the Sunday Roster.

We only have 16 volunteers to cover the 5 spots required each Sunday, and 8 of these are Committee Members. This means of course, that the members are rostered on quite frequently at the moment. Our Roster Secretary is very accommodating in spreading the load and fitting in with volunteers' other commitments.

The roster involves either a 10am to 1pm time slot or a 1pm to4pm at History Village, or 11am to 1pm at Stirk Cottage. It pretty much involves opening or closing and checking the alarm. No entrance monies need to be taken, this is all done by through the Visitor Centre.

If you are interested, we would put you on with one of the current volunteers to make it easier for you to learn.

I Hope to hear from some keen vollies.

Please help if you can and contact the office on 9293 1371.

Best wishes

Jenny Lewis
KDHS President

What's New

We collected a pump recently retrieved from the banks of Piesse Brook, on what was originally a Soldier Settler's Orchard, planted in the 1920s. It is a Southern Cross Double Acting Power Pump. Weighing on at 8cwt (406kgs) this posed several problems with its' recovery, but is now installed in the Village, near the dunny.