

Balwyn Historical Society News October 24, 2020

Greetings,

I am sure we are all hoping for restrictions to be eased so that we can begin to lead more normal lives again. However, it is unlikely that we will be able to resume our regular face-to-face meetings before February 2021. Attached is the president's report and another article on Deepdene in the 1950s.

Enjoy,

Marilyn

President's report

Balwyn Historical Society (BHS) like many other community groups has found 2020 a challenging year during COVID19 restrictions. Our regular, face-to-face meetings were suspended after our last regular meeting was held in March 2020. Most face-to-face activities were also suspended at the Balwyn Evergreen Centre where we hold our meetings. Prior to that, we had a very good year in 2019 with many interesting speakers, regular monthly newsletters and a well-attended final meeting of the year when we were entertained by Pete Smith of Channel 9 fame followed by a delightful supper when we could all get together and chat.

Despite the setbacks due to the coronavirus, the BHS committee has worked hard to keep members feeling connected. About twice per month we email to members an informal newsletter containing a short article and information. Many of these articles contain local content such as growing up in Balwyn during the 1940s and 50s and household activities in Deepdene during the same period. Patricia O' Dwyer has taken us on a tour of the shops in Deepdene also in the 1950s. It has been a pleasure to receive additional material from our members on a variety of topics. In addition to this we have emailed updates on historical topics available on Zoom or via webinar, sent music clips, comedy routines, travel photographs and items of interest to our members on at least a weekly basis. For those few members who do not have access to email we have mailed out printed copies of the newsletters and also phone them to have a chat at intervals.

As we have held so few face-to-face meetings your committee decided to waive membership fees normally due on July 1 of the new financial year. It was felt it would be unfair to charge for membership given members cannot attend meetings. In common with other community groups, we decided to defer our AGM normally held in October until our first meeting in February, 2021 when annual fees will be due.

The BHS committee membership has seen a few changes. Sharon Bondy, our web manager, resigned after five years managing and updating the BHS website. We owe special thanks to Sharon for her great work and efforts on our behalf. We are delighted that Philip Mallis offered to join the committee and act as web manager in her place. Heather Alford also joined the committee which means we will be under less pressure when meetings finally resume.

The work of committee members is varied. We respond to a steady stream of queries posted on our website often relating to family history or research on houses in the locality. In the past year we worked with Boroondara Council on the mural in Yerrin Street, Balwyn. However, for about two years, our major interaction with Council representatives has been in regard to the new Canterbury Community Precinct. It is planned that three Boroondara Historical Societies (the Canterbury History Group, Surrey Hills Historical Society and BHS) will use specially designed premises including office space, exhibition space, archival storage and meeting rooms in the precinct. One of the advantages has been that BHS committee representatives have had many meetings with the other historical societies and the opportunity to comment on and work with Council and architects on the scheme. Planning for the whole project is well developed and it is anticipated the build will begin shortly.

Hopefully, we will be able to resume our normal activities under a COVID safe plan early next year.

I would like to thank you all for your patience, understanding and above all your feedback and appreciation in difficult times. Thank you also to committee members Pat O'Dwyer, Matthew Ety-Leal, Barbara Russell, Heather Alford and Philip Mallis. Your efforts, advice and help are greatly appreciated.

Take care and stay safe,

Dr Marilyn J Poole.
President, BHS

Deepdene Shops - c. 1951-52
by
Patricia O'Dwyer

During the 1940s and 50s Deepdene was a thriving shopping centre much frequented by local residents. As a child I walked to Our Lady of Good Counsel School most days. If it was raining I caught the tram - the fare - a penny each way.

Take a walk along Whitehorse Road with me starting on the south side near the park.

On the corner of Walsh Street was the Deepdene Dairy. Later it would become the Model Dairy when it was renovated to resemble an American soda fountain. Then you could sit on a stool at the counter and order a milkshake or malted milk – strawberry, caramel, chocolate or any other of a dozen flavors.

Cross Walsh Street and look at the new hair styles displayed in the Ladies' Hairdresser. Slip into Murray's Library and select a romance for Grandma and a western for Dad from the shelves. Admire the new fashions in the frock shop and buy threepence worth of scrap material from Gebbie's to make doll's clothes. Pass by the Holeproof factory, Conboy's Ladies Drapers, and Beaton's fruit shop. Drop off a pair of shoes to be restitched at Wadsworth Boot Repairers. Wander past the motor cycle shop and radio repairers before crossing Barnsbury Road.

Collect a prescription from Deeble's chemist, withdraw some cash from the ANZ bank then admire the rings and watches in the jeweller's shop. Hurry past the dentist with his slow, noisy drill. Stroll by the sporting goods and cordial factories, the Scout Hall, and the timber merchants. Cross the old Outer Circle cutting and you're at school.

On the way home, the first stop is the milk bar on the north side of Whitehorse Road. If you're lucky and have a penny to spend, decide what to buy - a small ice-cream or an ice block in a cone. Linger over the lolly counter – a penny will buy you a sherbet bag or bomb, a bull's eye, or an assortment of smaller favourites. Read the latest headlines on the boards outside Dale & Langley's newsagency and sneak a look at the front page of *Truth* to see what the latest scandal is.

Once over Creswick Street you're at Moran & Cato's. If you're with friends, pool your pennies for three pence worth of broken biscuits. Or, if you're shopping for the family, go to the counter at the back of the shop and check out the array of large biscuit tins on the shelves – "I'll have three teddy bears, four assorted creams, six malt biscuits, four ginger nuts and..." Pay your weekly shilling for the Christmas Club – that way you'll be sure you can afford the Christmas ham and chicken. (You'd laugh out loud if someone told you that in years to come chicken would be an everyday meal).

How much are the chops and sausages in the butcher's window? Will they be cheaper further down the street? There's no money for the next sweet shop; so, it's down the hill, past the dress shop to the Oslo Bakery with its wonderful aroma of baking bread. If the bread cart drivers are still on strike, line up with all the other children to wait for the fresh bread to come out of the oven. Place your order for half a high-tin loaf, and hope you'll get the convex half – if so, you'll be able to tear off a few strips to nibble on the way home without it being too noticeable. Miss Bennett's well-stocked drapery and wool shop is next on the corner with skeins of wool just waiting to be stretched over the end of two chairs and rolled into balls.

From Pretoria Street to Leonard Street you have a choice of several more butchers, grocers and greengrocers, and a delicatessen for slices of pork or beef 'strass' for the week's sandwiches. Perhaps Harold Blair, the famous tenor, will serve you. Call into the Red Robin Book Club - any new titles?

Drool over the cakes in Payne's – cream horns, sponge cakes, rainbow cake and lamingtons. Line up in the Deepdene Grocery for the chance to sample a new product – tinned tomato soup. Collect a bottle of milk from Caldwell's milk bar before taking a detour down Leonard Street to order mallee roots from the wood yard and pick peppercorns from the trees outside.

Back to Whitehorse Road and it's up the hill, past the last grocer, and into the Post Office. Buy some stamps for the wireless licence book - you don't want to be fined for not having an up-to-date licence when the inspector calls. Lastly, remember to send a telegram to arrange a visit to relatives. With any luck, you'll soon be able to afford to get the phone connected. Then you'll no longer have to rely on the telegram boy to deliver messages or walk to the phone box on the corner of Nott Street to make a call.

Turn down May Street and hopefully you'll meet some friends in the park to while away some time before finally heading home.

Patricia O'Dwyer

