

# History of the Kurth Kiln Festival

The first Kurth Kiln Festival took place on the weekend of **April 13 and 14 in 2002** and was called "Beyond the big Smoke". The title was suggested by Ray Boatman, President National Trust Australia, Dandenong Ranges Branch, whose group wanted to participate to experience the atmosphere of the real bush. Dick Cleary and Kerry Bonica, members of the Friends of Kurth Kiln group, took on the task of organising it.

It was a huge success and the group decided to make the festival an annual event. Since then, because of Kerri and Dick's input, the festival has gone from strength to strength, with more people participating each year.

The second festival took place on **17 & 18 May 2003**. It was decided to call it "Friendship Festival". The group invited all the local volunteer friends' groups to participate: the Helmeted Honey Eaters, the Friends of Bunyip State Park, Gembrook Fauna and Flora Friends, Gembrook Tourism, Gembrook Township committee, the Gembrook Craft Group, the Red Cross and the Basketry Institute of Australia. Again it went well, but a two day event proved too taxing, so the Friends of Kurth Kiln decided that the Saturday should be used as a preparation day only, where participants could meet and set-up in a relaxed atmosphere, and Sunday the open day of the festival.

To promote the heritage that is Kurth Kiln, the **18 April 2004** festival was called Kurth Kiln Heritage Festival. It won the "Cardinia Community Event of the Year" Award. Organiser Dick Cleary accepted the award on behalf of the Friends of Kurth at the Australia Day celebration on Wednesday 26 January at the Cultural Centre in Pakenham. The name Heritage Festival was found to be received well by the community and was adopted as the permanent title.

On **April 10, 2005**, the fourth Festival was again well attended, with the mock bank-robbery, staged by our Highland friends, a certain crowd pleaser. A surprise hot-spell brought an unexpected total fire ban which prevented the damper making and blacksmiths' demonstrations, but it did not dampen the spirit of the participants and visitors.

All the traditional activities plus a few extra ones, such as sheep sheering, were again offered at the festival on **April 2 in 2006** and on **April 22 in 2007**. Pictures of some of the people, the events and the activities can be found on the Kurth Kiln Website [www.vicnet.net.au/~fofkk](http://www.vicnet.net.au/~fofkk) under their respective headings

This year's festival will be on **Sunday April 6**. All the usual activities plus others are scheduled, and it should again make for a fun experience in the Kurth Kiln Park.

The Friends of Kurth Kiln are grateful to all the people who donate their time and resources to make the event such a success. The list is endless, too many to mention individually; but we would like to thank Parks Victoria, especially Ralph, our contact Ranger. We acknowledge the many people who bring their animals, machinery, tools, and displays, the groups with stalls, the people who entertain the visitors with the mock bank robbery and those who entertain the children and adults. A big thank-you also to the dignitaries for the official opening ceremony and those who assist with the organising and help out on the day. We thank them all and value their input, but most of all we thank the public for their support of the event.