

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY
THE ROTARY CLUB OF NUNAWADING
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
ANTONIO PARK

In 1878, Thomas and Emily Antonio settled on the area of land at the corner of Whitehorse Road and Deep Creek Road. Seventy-five years later, in 1953, John Antonio, one of their six sons, bequeathed the property to the Nunawading City Council for use as a permanent park, a garden, a place of recreation and a playground.

The Community Service Committee of the Rotary Club in 1967/68, late in its year of operation, suggested that the development of the 17 acres of the park could be a project which would be of benefit to the local community. One of the conditions of the bequest of the land required that, as far as possible, all native trees and shrubs were to be preserved in their natural state.

After an inspection of the park with the City Engineer and the Curator of Parks and Gardens, plans were prepared for submission to the City Council for approval of the proposed development, to be carried out in three stages.

The following Community Service Committee of 1968/69 took up the proposal immediately as a major project, but decided that the commencement of work should be deferred until funds for the first stage, estimated at \$1500, had been raised. Consequently, work on the building of a barbecue fire-place and picnic tables, with associated tree-planting, did not begin until September 1969. However, all was completed within three months, and the second stage was embarked upon immediately.

This consisted of the construction of a stone-work entrance to the park from Whitehorse Road, and the installation of gates, the design for which was selected by club members from three designs submitted. There was some delay in having the design of the entrance and gates approved by the Council, but eventually work got under way in August 1970.

Rotary plaques fixed to the stone-work identified the role of the club in the development of the park to this stage, with another plaque acknowledging the bequest of the land by the Antonio family. The entrance was officially opened on November 8, 1970.

The City Engineer during part of this period was Mal Black, who was a charter member of the club. On his retirement in 1968, he was succeeded in his municipal role by Bill- Sewart, who soon became an active member of Rotary. The untimely death of Bill in March, 1976, was a great loss to the municipality and to the club, and within a month or two of his death, it was resolved to proceed with the development of Antonio Park with the construction of a shelter, to be dedicated as a memorial to the late Bill Sewart.

City Council approval for the concept was obtained, together with the offer of a subsidy, and through one of the club members, students of Civil Engineering at Swinburne Institute of Technology were invited to submit designs for the shelter. One of these was chosen, and awarded the prize of \$100. Work commenced early in 1977.

The club's annual Christmas picnic for the children of members that year was held at the park on December 4th, and included in the program was the official unveiling of the commemorative plaque on the new shelter.

During previous years and for some time after, Presidents of the club planted a tree, or one was planted on their behalf, in the immediate area of the park to mark their year in office.

Over the intervening years, the gates have been removed, and one side of the entrance has been demolished. There are no Rotary plaques remaining, and only the inscription on the small memorial plate for Bill Sewart on the shelter identifies the work of the Rotary Club of Nunawading with the development of Antonio Park.



Antonio Park Entrance



Picnic Shelter at Antonio Park