

those of the local builders, Alexa Goyder and Myrtle Houston. An article in the district press called it "the Warrandyte Holocaust."<sup>315</sup>

However, community groups were quick to rebuild their public buildings. A new South Warrandyte Hall, built by community effort, was opened on 16 December 1939<sup>316</sup> and was soon being used for public events. In July 1940, local Army volunteers were farewelled at a dance in the hall,<sup>317</sup> and there were regular community singing sessions. It was reported in August 1940 that the new hall had "had a successful run" with a record balance sheet.<sup>318</sup>

The biggest event in the new hall was the 1941 South Warrandyte Show and Carnival organised by the local RSL branch. This event was described in great detail in the district press. Official guests included two MPs, the local Member, Hon. W. Everard, and the Hon. G. L. Chambers, and the Mayor and Mayoress of Ringwood. There were prizes for produce, cooking, jam making and needlework. However, the star attraction was a big arena program of motor cycle events presented by the Harley Club.<sup>319</sup>

As with the other district halls at Templestowe and East Doncaster, the South Warrandyte Hall is owned now by the City of Doncaster and Templestowe. It was purchased by the Council in 1977 but is run still by a local Committee of Management.<sup>320</sup>

*Of local historical significance* as a community meeting place recreated through community efforts after the 1939 bushfire.

### **The Naughton House and Factory** **6-8 Naughton Ave (Cnr. Hutchinson Ave), Warrandyte.**

Merv. Naughton, a leading Victorian manufacturer of sporting rifles, was rated for an unfinished house on four acres of land in the Hutchinson Estate in the 1946-47 Warrandyte Riding records.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> *Croydon Mail and Mount Dandenong Advertiser*, Ringwood, 19 Jan. 1939.

<sup>316</sup> *The Mail*, Ringwood, 15 Aug. 1939.

<sup>317</sup> *The Mail*, Ringwood, 20 July 1940.

<sup>318</sup> *The Mail*, 15 Aug. 1940.

<sup>319</sup> *The Mail*, 13 March 1941.

<sup>320</sup> Interviews with Rosemary Adam and Bill Woods (President of the Hall Committee), July 1994.

<sup>321</sup> Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe General and Water RB 1946-47 No. 33 (NAV 22 pounds).

**Doncaster & Templestowe Heritage Study**  
**Additional Historical Research. 50**

Naughton's Lot 23( the site of 6-8 Naughton Avenue) was shown on Lodge Plan 17925. Naughton and Hutchinson Avenues created by this subdivision were named after Naughton and Hutchinson, the Warrantye pound keeper.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>322</sup>Lodge Plan 17925.

By 1948-49 Naughton's building was rated as a factory.<sup>323</sup> Roy Devon Christenson, who acted as Naughton's foreman and helped built the Naughton Avenue residence and factory, described the house as designed by Naughton himself. Building operations were assisted by Merv's brother, Don, a worker in the timber industry, and his brother-in-law, Ron Spargo, a builder. Spargo was later associated with the construction of Spargo's Hut at Falls Creek. Naughton and his wife, Lois, lived in the ground floor office area while the rest of the house was built.

Naughton's Warrandyte house and factory was built of reinforced concrete with a flat roof on top, planned to house an observatory. The building was on three levels. The ground floor (which became the factory) had a storeroom and vaults. Inside the storeroom was a strong room used for testing pistols. About 10,000 rifles were put into the storeroom under Police supervision while the concrete was still being poured.<sup>324</sup> The first floor was living quarters with two bedrooms. There were two more bedrooms on the floor above. The building was never completed.<sup>325</sup>

Merv.(1909-1988) was born in South Australia and grew up on a farm, where the first showed an interest in guns. However, he never received any formal training in their design or manufacture. He worked for a time as a carpenter. Later, during the Second World War, Merv. worked in the munitions factory at Maribyrnong, making anti-aircraft guns. Following the war, he worked for the Melbourne firm, Alcock and Pierce, old established gunsmiths and dealers.

A few years before Merv. and his wife Lois, a nurse, moved into the first floor of their Warrandyte home in 1954, Merv. began to buy surplus Army rifles to convert into sporting rifles. A lot of these military rifles were converted into .22- .303 Falcon rifles (Naughton's trade name for these rifles) by replacing the military barrels with commercial ones. An account of the Falcon rifle appeared in a 1951 American publication.<sup>326</sup> He also designed and marketed a rifle of his own design, the Fieldman Naughton.<sup>327</sup> Naughton began work on this new Australian rifle in the early 1950s, the first rifles being completed in 1963-64. This rifle was "regarded by the experts as one of the best sporting rifles in the world," according to one writer.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> Shire of Doncaster and Templestowe RB 1948-49 No.2348 (H crossed out and Factory written in).

<sup>324</sup> Information supplied by Wally Albert, a Naughton family friend.

<sup>325</sup> Interview with Roy Christenson, July 1994.

<sup>326</sup> C.S.Landis, *Woodchucks and Woodchuck Rifles*, New York, 1951, p.338.

<sup>327</sup> *Merv. Naughton: A Remembrance*, Bruce Bence in Warrandyte Historical Society Newsletter, June 1988; *Sporting Shooter*, Aug. 1965 (technical review of the Fieldman).

<sup>328</sup> *East Yarra News*, 27 Jan. 1970.

Naughton's rifles were manufactured in the Warrandyte factory, using machines designed and built by Naughton. In 1970, six men were working in the basement factory, and in a new factory building constructed at the rear of the house. They produced more than 150 rifles a month. These rifles were exported to twelve countries including America, Sweden, Switzerland and New Zealand.<sup>329</sup>

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Naughton had become one of the leading sporting rifle manufacturers in Victoria. He dealt mainly with the Melbourne Sports Depot and the firm Alcock and Pierce, and also sold interstate in Adelaide and NSW. In 1969, Naughton was listed as one of 20 gunsmiths and importers operating in Victoria. His reputation led to the Victorian Police often consulting him on ballistic matters<sup>330</sup>

Naughton was an active member of the Warrandyte Fire Brigade and developed a special rifle that was useful in firefighting operations. He regularly demonstrated these rifles during Warrandyte's Fire Prevention Week displays. He was also an instructor on firearm safety and a member of the State Government Firearm Consultative Committee. Another interest was astronomy. Merv. was the author of an unpublished work , "Relativity- Fact or Fiction."

Merv. died on 3 April 1988, and his wife, Lois, in 1994. They had no children.<sup>331</sup> An expert examination of the Naughton house and former factory is recommended to determine how much remains from the days of the Naughton ownership and the development of his successful manufacturing business.

*Of State historical and social significance.* as evidence of an unusual and successful manufacturing enterprise that expressed the creativity and skills of one man, Merv. Naughton, who became a leading Victorian inventor, manufacturer and exporter of sporting rifles.

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<sup>329</sup> *East Yarra News*, 27 Jan. 1970.

<sup>330</sup> Interview with Chistenson.

<sup>331</sup> Bruce Bence article, interview with Christenson, obituary March 1988 in unidentified newspaper.