

NORTHAMPTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Waggle they think of next?

We were looking for activities to increase local engagement at Chiverton House as well as teach about some of the hardships that our early settlers endured.

We decided that making a Wagga would be fun way to include a lot of people, be relatively cheap and encourage intergenerational knowledge exchange. Ideally, we wanted some old hessian sugar bags or wool packs, so that each participant could have their own panel to decorate. Our president Carole has the amazing knack of procuring the impossible and from places unknown she produced a box of very old, very dirty hessian bags that were perfect for the project.

We successfully applied for a grant with the Shire of Northampton for funding to get set up for the first session of sewing and provide meals for the day.

Of course, our little project quickly got out of hand and before long we were contacting former and current residents of Northampton for their stories about sewing and the art of making do, and then after chatting to a few international friends we realized that sewing was an integral part of every girl's life and so we included their stories as well. It seems sewing and textiles that was a bond between people from different countries and backgrounds. Now we had stories, lots of pictures, lots of donations of early needle work made from early last century and a wonderful collection of school samplers from over 60 years ago. Our little project was growing and with lots of local advertising the word was getting about. The name alone raised a lot of interest, and just the idea of having a free day, chatting and hand sewing appealed to many.

Our project was really coming together when we realized that we hadn't included anything about our first nations people and as very few examples of early skin clothing exists, we resorted to the internet and were lucky enough to get permission from some of the prominent sites to use their images of grass spinning and decorated skin clothing in our display. And of course, we contacted the National Wool Museum and were able to copy some of their images.

It was a big job laminating the sheets and putting them up on display. We sent out invites to Irwin and Greenough Museums,



did lots of local advertising and of course word of

mouth inviting people. The local high school also brought one of their classes down to have a look and learn about the early days and how essential sewing was for everyone. Interestingly only two of the girls had ever sewn anything before. We had set up some hessian, old bag needles, and wool for the students to have a try; most enjoyed the experience.



Two of our lovely ladies were aged in the 90s' Gwen 93 and Ena 96, after a while they realized that they had gone to school together, both could still sew and teach the rest of us a few things. One of the best things was all the stories that came out as we sat and stitched and talked. Stories about how their family had made all the kids clothes out of hessian, or how clothes were cut up and re-purposed until they eventually disintegrated.

We had about 35 come and sew for the day and approximately 20 come and go during the day, some just dropped in for a cuppa and others for a chat and some just to see what the fuss was about. Just like people each panel in the Wagga is different. Each panel made from textile

scraps, a wonderful way to show the art of making do.

What started as a bit of fun turned out to be a wonderful project that actually took two sessions and a bit extra to finish just in time to display at the Northampton District Agricultural Show. It is hoped that we will put all the stories into a little book for sale at the museum. One girl told the story of how the teacher asked her to go and finish writing up her project and she would finish the sewing because she couldn't bear to watch the student making such a mess of it anymore.

The display was removed at the beginning of December.



Figure 1 FIFO TO DISCO

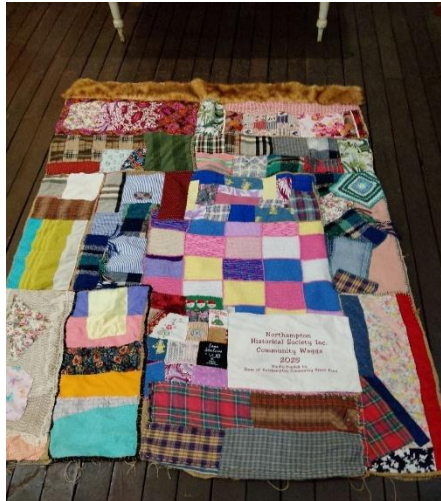


Figure 2 Community Wagga