

NEW EXHIBITION AT EMERALD MUSEUM Carl Axel Nobelius 'an innovator in Horticulture'

The Cardinia Shire Mayor Brett Owen Mayor opened a new exhibition last Sunday 28 May, featuring a comprehensive history of the famous Gembrook Nurseries in Emerald which became the largest nursery in the southern hemisphere in the early 1900s.

This permanent exhibition tells the story of Carl Axel Nobelius, and his legacy. Nobelius was known as "the man who grew a town"; he employed more than 80 workers, many of whom settled in the area.

Nobelius travelled throughout Australia and New Zealand tirelessly promoting his business, and producing a beautiful catalogue each year. The Nursery supplied large quantities of ornamental trees to urban and regional municipalities to provide shade for streets and parks. The Botanical Gardens and the Fitzroy gardens were regular customers.

As the nursery prospered Nobelius built Carramar, a 16 roomed Victorian mansion overlooking his nursery. Carramar was built to entertain important guests among them, Dame Nellie Melba, and the Victorian Governor.

It hard to imagine that Emerald and the Dandenongs was cleared of nearly all the trees, first by the bullockies and then the selectors. Government policy was that each selector had to clear so much of his property each year otherwise it would be re-claimed.

NOBELIUS HERITAGE PARK

The four hectare Nobelius Heritage Park in Emerald, now registered as of State and National Significance is a remnant of the once vast Gembrook Nursery established by Carl Axel Nobelius from 1886.

The 1900 year old packing shed and railway siding are reminders of the significant role Nobelius played in the Belgrave to Gembrook narrow gauge railway line, now part of the Puffing Billy Railway. Nobelius lobbied the Government for this narrow gauge rail way to transport his trees to Port Melbourne and for public transport.

The Nursery had an extensive range of exotic plants and fruit trees, supplied to other prominent nurseries of the era, and influenced garden and orchard plantings throughout Australia, as well as exporting to the USA, South America, South Africa, New Zealand, Europe and Asia.

Through the supply of exotic trees to municipal councils in many parts of Australia, the Nobelius Nursery had a significant influence on Victoria's landscapes, including public parks, private gardens, orchards, avenues of honour and tree-shaded streets.

By World War I. the nursery, which was run as a family business by Nobelius and his four sons, held two million stock trees, produced large quantities of fruit, and

conducted a huge export trade with other Australian states and overseas. The nursery was the largest in the southern hemisphere and, at its greatest extent, covered 650 hectares, including the land occupied by the present Emerald Lake Park and Emerald Country Resort.

The Museum contains an important collection of relics from the Nobelius Nursery, which includes ledgers, wages books, stock records dating from the 1890s, original catalogues, tools and photographs. It is considered to be a unique record of the nursery industry in Victoria.

Chris Britton
President
Emerald Museum



Nobelius Heritage Garden in splendid May foliage

Photography by Kirsty Hall



The rare Illawarra Flame Tree sits proudly outside the front of the Emerald Museum

Photography by Kirsty Hall



Gembrook Nurseries – Northern Section View

Museum News

The committee has had a very busy 2017 with the finalizing of the Cardinia Shire maintenance grant stage 2, to fire proof the museum. Our archives are now as safe as possible from the threat of fire.

We have produced an illustrated brochure for Nobelius Heritage Park, showing the plantings and trees that match the outside map located in front of the museum.

Next time you visit the park please pick up a guide, the autumn trees have been spectacular this year.

I would like to acknowledge the Emerald Men's Shed for making a display cabinet to house the Nobelius labelling machine, and also for the construction of two beautiful park benches made from the Monterey Cypress hedge that was removed from Worrell Reserve. Thank you to Tom Algra for milling the wood for this project. Thank you Alan Bennett, Mike Ellery and everyone who contributed to making and installing these benches located on the museum veranda.

We would also like to thank Graeme Legge and Lynne Trensky for support of the Heritage Week festival, taking many visitors on the heritage walk around Emerald.

The museum is open every Wednesday 10am till 3pm and Sundays 1.30 till 4pm

Come and visit us and enjoy this wonderful Emerald history,



Nobelius with the Victorian Governor 1910