



Altona Laverton Historical Society Inc.

PO Box 236 Altona 3018

NEWSLETTER

Mobil a Brief History

The Vacuum Oil Company was the first oil company established in Australia. Prior to this, other brands of oil-based products were marketed by overseas companies through their Australian agents.



The company set up their Queen Street, Melbourne, branch in February 1895, less than 30 years after Vacuum first started operations in the US. Vacuum Oil's first salesman in Australia, Mr David Clarke, sold the company's first barrel of lubricating oil to a gold mining operation at Eaglehawk, near Bendigo, on his first day in the job.

In March 1904, Vacuum Oil was officially incorporated under Victorian Law as a proprietary company, and in 1906 the company issued Australia's first ever chart of "Recommendations to Motorists" covering about 200 makes of car.

By 1908, Vacuum was growing rapidly and merged with the Colonial Oil Co, a company marketing kerosene and motor spirit, adding to Vacuum's specialty lubricant products. In 1916, Vacuum introduced its "Plume" and "Laurel" brands to the Australian market and a year later brought its first 100-gallon, horse drawn tank wagon into service. (cont'd)



Mobil a Brief History (cont'd)

As motor vehicles became more popular in Australia, Vacuum expanded its operations. In 1924 Vacuum opened its first bulk petroleum products terminal at Pulpit Point in Sydney and took delivery of its first imported bulk oil products cargo, a 1.5 million gallon shipment carried from the United States by the tanker "HT Harper".

A decade later, Vacuum introduced "Ethyl", Australia's first Super grade motor spirit. Around the same time in the US, Vacuum's parent company, Vacuum Oil Inc, merged with the Standard Oil Company of New York to become Socony Vacuum, then Socony Mobil that ultimately became Mobil Corporation. Vacuum replaced the famous Plume brand name with Mobilgas in 1954.



Socony Mobil introduced the Flying Red Horse (Pegasus) logo which first appeared in Australia in 1939 and became one of Australia's best recognised corporate symbols.



Mobil: Altona Refinery

In October 1946, Mobil began constructing the Altona Refinery near Melbourne. The refinery commenced operations in June 1949, initially making lubricating oil and bitumen from imported crude oil. In 1955, a multi-million dollar expansion program came on stream extending the refinery's product range into motor vehicle fuels and, in 1956, it produced Australia's first locally made aviation gasoline.

In 1958, Mobil unveiled plans to build an oil refinery at Port Stanvac, south of Adelaide and operations began in 1963. At the same time, Mobil announced the construction of a major petrochemical plant near the Altona Refinery that produced its first products for sale in June 1961.

The discovery of vast reserves of crude oil and gas in Bass Strait in the early 1960s changed the Australian refining industry dramatically, as most companies changed to processing the locally produced oil instead of importing their raw materials. In 1970 further expansion and modification of the Altona Refinery was completed, making it possible for Bass Strait crude to be processed.



Mobil announced its return to producing lubricating oils in Australia in 1973, commencing construction of a lubricating oil refinery alongside the existing Adelaide fuels product refinery. The lubricating oil refinery opened in 1976.

In 1985, Mobil negotiated a major asset swap with BP in which Mobil vacated the Western Australia retail market in exchange for acquiring a large portion of BP's South Australian, Victorian and New South Wales retail market. Mobil re-entered the West Australian retail fuel market in December 1995 when it purchased the Amgas service station network and related business.

In late 1990, Mobil purchased Esso Australia's refining and marketing operations. This gave Mobil 100 per cent ownership of Petroleum Refineries (Australia) Pty Ltd, the company that operated both the Altona and Adelaide Refineries.

In 1997 a major modernisation project was completed at the Altona Refinery with Mobil spending \$250 million to replace the old Thermoform Catalytic Cracker (TCC) with a modern unit known as a Fluidised Catalytic Cracker (FCC), representing the latest in refinery technology. The FCC significantly improved efficiency by allowing the refinery to process a larger range of crude oil, making it a more competitive purchaser on the international market.

On November 30, 1999, the Australian assets of Esso were merged with those of Mobil as part of the global merger of Exxon Corporation and Mobil Oil Corporation and today Mobil is part of the world's premier petroleum and petrochemical company.

The Mobil Refinery has been part of the Altona landscape for about 70 years and has always been a key part of the Altona Community not just as a major employer but also in its support of a wide range of community programs.



Pegasus begins Life

The flying red horses, the symbol of Mobil began their journey in 1911, when a Vacuum Oil Company subsidiary in Cape Town, South Africa, first trademarked the Pegasus logo.

Based in Rochester, New York, Vacuum Oil had built a successful petroleum lubricants business around an 1869 patent by its founder, Hiram Everest, long before gasoline was even a branded product. At first, a stylised red gargoyle advertised the company, which produced early petroleum-based lubricants for horse-drawn carriages and steam engines.

The Pegasus trademark proved to be a more enduring image. In Greek mythology, Pegasus – a winged horse — carried thunderbolts for Zeus. By 1931 growth of the automobile industry expanded the Vacuum Oil product lineup to include Pegasus Spirits and Mobilgas – later simplified to Mobil.

When Standard Oil of New York and Vacuum Oil combined to form Socony-Vacuum Oil Company, the new company adopted the familiar winged trademark, as does an affiliate, Magnolia Petroleum.



Oil Bottles



Before disposable metal, paper, and plastic engine-oil containers became commonplace, drivers pulling into gas stations and asking for oil often had to watch and wait as the lubricant was hand pumped from a drum into a spouted glass bottle. Sometimes the oil would be waiting in quart bottles that sat in special racks. Either way, back in that golden full-service era, the attendant would pour the oil into the car's engine for the customer.

Assuring motorists that the oil in those drums was really as advertising and not just some inferior-quality substitute, oil companies embossed their names and logos on the sides of these clear bottles. Sometimes they were given distinctive shapes to make the customer feel better about the bulk-oil purchase. Mobil Oil went so far as to make diamond-shaped "Filpruf" bottles, with embossed gargoyles on their sides. The metal spouts of these bottles were the Filpruf parts, because they could only be filled with a corresponding nozzle attached to a drum of Mobiloil.



POSTER ART & INDUSTRY

WALKABOUT, March 1st, 1945 33



50th ANNIVERSARY
of the
VACUUM OIL COMPANY PTY. LTD.

1895 — 1945



This year Vacuum Oil Company Pty. Ltd. celebrates its Golden Jubilee. Established in Melbourne, 1895, in a small office with a staff of 3, Vacuum has grown to a Nation-wide Organisation with a staff of over 3,000 —serving Australia in Peace and in War, in good times and bad, in city, town and country, with Petroleum Products of the Highest Quality.

VACUUM OIL COMPANY PTY. LTD.
(INCORPORATED IN AUSTRALIA)

PLUME MOTOR SPIRIT	LAUREL KEROSENE
VOCO POWER KEROSENE	MOBILOIL

and other High Quality Petroleum Products 458 (A1)

Presidents Report

Hello members and friends of Altona-Laverton Historical Society,

The 2019 year is speeding by at an alarming rate and your Committee and Members have been very busy with a number of projects both in the Homestead and undertaking important research.

Firstly, we were fortunate enough to receive an equipment grant from HBCC towards the purchase of office furniture. The research team are in the process of creating a larger office space in the museum room that will ultimately become a research room — initially for members to be able to conduct research in a collaborative, secure environment but later for members of the public to work with our members in undertaking personal and genealogy research under member guidance.

The small office will be become a storage area for the ever-growing number of artefacts and items. The aim of these changes is to be able to keep a greater amount of research onsite so that it can be catalogued, loaded onto our website and Facebook pages and included within our newsletter.



The state-wide Heritage Festival is on now (April/May) and we have a beautiful toy display on to get the conversations going about the toys we played with when we were young and how little some have changed over the generations. It is great conversation starter between children and parents.

Devonshire Tea is on again for May but the Reillys will be away — so we are leaving it in the hands of our gorgeous volunteer scone bakers and service will be done by members of Seabreeze Quilters along with our regular volunteers. If you are in Altona on Sunday 5 May (between 10.30 and 2.30) please drop in for a wonderful Devonshire Tea.

We are looking for more volunteers for Tuesdays during the Homestead opening hours as we see our lovely Joan retire from her many years of greeting visitors to the Homestead. If you have a few hours to spare, if not weekly, then at least fortnightly, we would really appreciate it. Several of our members still work full time so we are appealing to the retirees or part time workers for support! If you have time to spare that please contact Ann Cassar (acassar@optusnet.com.au).

We do need to grow our membership, not only to share our love of local history, but also to share the load. We don't want to overwork our dedicated team! If you are not able to help, or find the night time meetings difficult to get to, please let us know how we can keep you connected and engaged — maybe a daytime social event might be of interest?

As the financial year draws to a close, the Committee will be calling a Special General Meeting on 18 June, which is one we do need you to attend, if possible. According to our constitution, we only need to discuss any changes to our membership fees for the coming year at a Special General Meeting and this needs to take place prior to our AGM in August. More information will be issued shortly about this meeting and any motion to change fees.

Upcoming Events



Special General Meeting - June 18, at the Homestead commencing 6.30 pm

Annual General Meeting - August 20, at the Homestead commencing 6.30 pm

Next Committee Meetings - May 21 & July 16
