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"THEIR MEMORY, FONDLY CHERISHED"

## Memorial to Two Birchip Pioneers

Last Sunday afternoon was the occasion of the unveiling of a memorial to two of Birchip's pioneers, the late Mr and Mrs James Phelps.

The handsome memorial was planned and donated by their grandson, Mr Vic Phelps, of Mt. Waverley, and the final designing was carried out by Mr Kevin Hogan, of Birchip, and erected by other members of the shire staff.

Mr Phelps and two cousins, Mrs Eda Thompson, of Dandenong, and Mrs Olga Telford, of Cheltenham, all grandchildren of the late Mr and Mrs James Phelps, were present on Sunday to attend the ceremony.

A large crowd gathered at the site of the memorial, which is on the point of land in front of J. J. O'Connor's garage (originally J. Phelps's blacksmith's shop).

All present were welcomed by the shire president, Cr. G. Cullinan, who then introduced Cr. Hillgrove.

Cr. Hillgrove read a short autobiography written by the late Mr James Phelps. It was entitled "75 years at the Forge — the plough that made the Mallee and the man who made the plough".

Born in 1859 at Ducks Pond, South Australia, Mr Phelps told of the days when dams were constructed with pick, shovel and wheelbarrow



The late Mr James Phelps

and a journey of 26 miles took 30 hours by bullock dray.

In 1893 he designed a stump-jump plough and made many of these implements for farmers in the area after he commenced

business in Birchip in 1890. He did not retire until August, 1949, when he was 90 years of age!

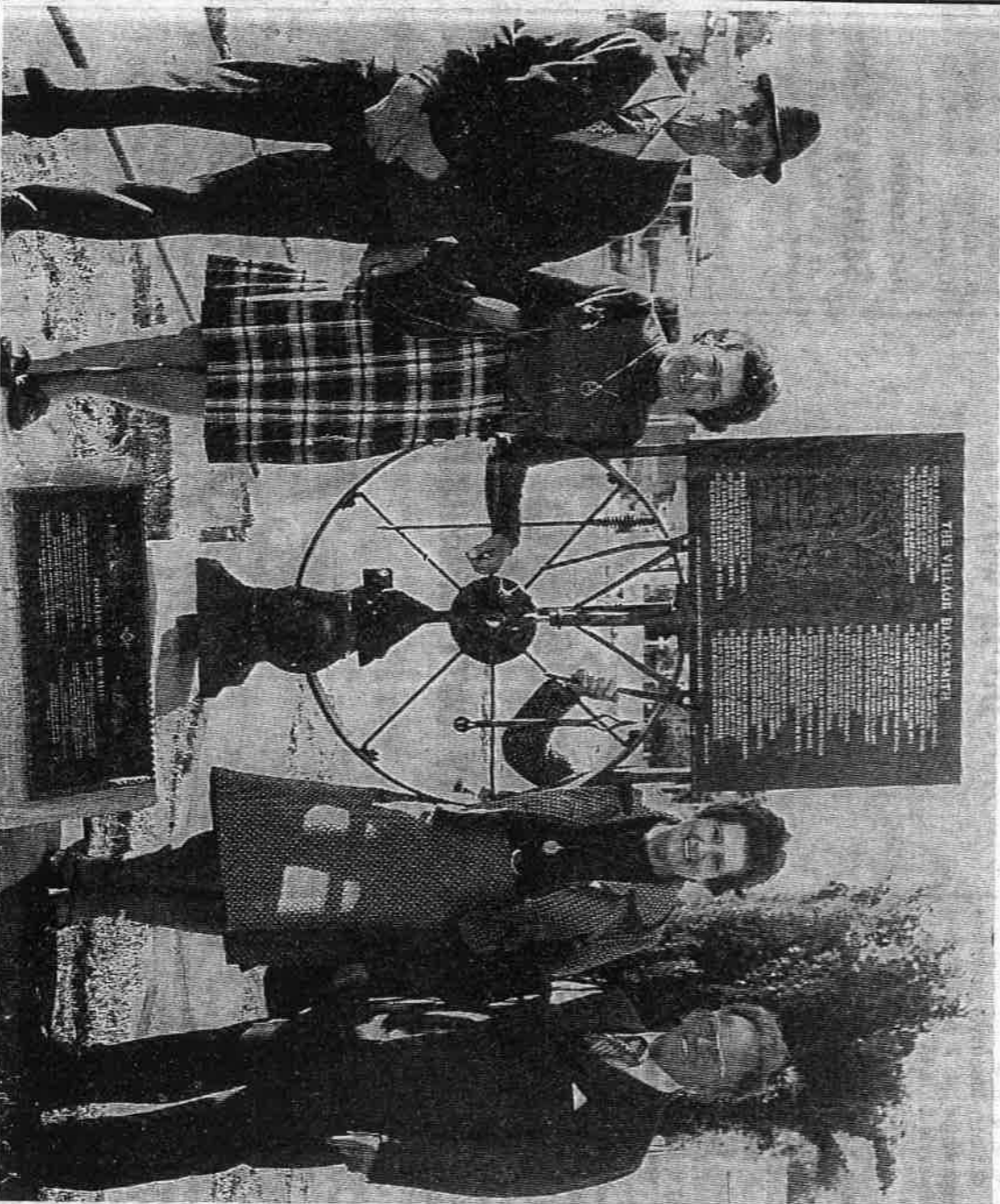
Symbolically the memorial comprises the anvil used by the late Mr Phelps, his striker's hammer and other tools, a plough share and horse shoe. It has two bronze plaques, one on top and the other at the base.

The Reverend G. L. Colquhoun, who was invited to speak, said of the memorial, "I suppose there are many people who are asking, 'Why set up this anvil and tools as a memorial?' There are some excellent modern works of art; why not one of these, instead of these old things?"

And perhaps some are saying, "Why bring back memories of the past (as these things do)? Surely we should be more concerned with the many problems of the present . . . and looking to, and planning for, the future."

He went on to say that though we should be concerned about the problems of the present and planning for the future, much could be learned from the past.

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Nephew Mr Perc. Phelps, grandchildren Mrs Olga Telford, Mrs Eda Thompson and Mr Vic. Phelps gathered around the memorial. The top plaque features Longfellow's poem, "The Village Blacksmith", with illustration. The plaque at the base has in brief the story of Mr Phelps and the plough he designed, and at the right this tribute to Mrs Phelps — "Pioneer Bush Nurse with the proud record of nursing 1,000 mothers without the loss of a mother or a child." Dedicated to our grandfather and grandmother. Grandson Vic. Phelps, Great Grandson Kent.