

The Pioneer Man standing tall in Cumming Avenue, was presented to the town in July 2006 to commemorate the contribution of the founders of the Birchip Agriculture and Pastoral Society in 1893 and all who worked and supported the annual Birchip Shows from 1893-2000.

After the statue was erected the Birchip A&P society voluntarily wound up and donated the balance of their funds to the Birchip Historical Society.

## Showtime

Perhaps better than anything else, the passing of the Birchip Show exemplifies the effects of time on small country towns like Birchip.

For many years, beginning in 1883, it was a yearly highlight, much anticipated and thoroughly enjoyed. Everyone went. Children thronged around the sideshows, the boxing tent, where locals were brave enough to take on the professionals. They loved the challenge of trying to throw a table tennis ball into the mouths of the rotating clowns, the fairy floss and the toffee apples, the cha cha and the shooting gallery and the merry-go-round.

For some, the ring was the most exciting of all. There were many riders who would compete in the equestrian events, in which riders from towns far and near would challenge the locals. Farmers could come to inspect the horses, cattle, sheep the compare them with their own, and to salivate over the latest machinery. The women's pavilion was genuinely impressive: the range of skills displayed there was astonishing.

Eddie Lee remembers that the local paper told of romances that began at the show, 'nurtured by the show dance.'

Traditionally, show week was always crucial to the prospects of a good crop: rain during show week, of course, was what everyone wanted. Just as often, or even more often than not, Show Day would exhibit all the characteristics of the summer to come: a clear blue sky, soaring temperatures, even hot winds.

Doyens of these old shows were Punter Connelly and Jack Coffey, whose voice could be heard over the loudspeaker announcing the various events. That voice will live on in many memories.

But many children today hardly know what the show was and certainly have no understanding of its importance in the annals of country life. Speed and Longerenong field days now cater for the avid machinery freak, and self-help organizations like Birchip Cropping Group run field days, expos and special events to provide agricultural education, and research and development programmes. Keen horse people join pony clubs, undertake cross country events, or simply ride around the farm.

Those who take time today can reflect on the shows and what they represented by taking a look at the Pioneer Man who stands in Cumming Avenue. He was unveiled by Kath Smith in XXXXXXXX? and commemorates the work of the inaugural committee and all subsequent workers and supporters of the A & P Society and the annual Birchip Show.

Pioneer Man is the creation of artist Alan Boromeo of Lockwood. He took 150 hours to build and his exterior sheet metal panel was recycled from the interior linings of a railway guard's van. Some of the original metal paint remains, and the moustache and rear hairline are constructed from old five-inch nails.

He is there to remind both visitors and locals of the courage and resilience of the original pioneers and of those many organisers who ran the Birchip Show for the good of the community.



Scotty unloads 'Dryazel' horses at Birchip station for the show, 1920s