

NEW [acquisitions]

The 'Sharpening King' and his 'Road Urchin'



The Road Urchin, also known as the Saw Doctor's Wagon.

photo: David Thurrowgood

In 1935, a young English migrant converted a horse-drawn wagon into a combined home and workshop that he christened the 'Road Urchin'. For the next 34 years, he travelled the length and breadth of eastern Australia earning a living as a travelling tinker. In June, the wagon was accepted into the National Historical Collection.

Harold James Wright, a carpenter from London, arrived in Australia at the height of the Great Depression. Like thousands of others, he was forced 'on the road' to earn a living. He quickly found that there was more money to be made repairing kitchenware and sharpening knives than in carpentry work. Harold invested his meagre savings into the Road Urchin and began the journey that only ended

with his death in Wangaratta Hospital in October 1969. At first, a single horse pulled his wagon but he soon fitted it onto the chassis of a 1928 Chevrolet truck. Later, it was towed by a David Brown tractor. To attract customers, he painted the new outfit in bright colours and decorated it with all kinds of signs and knick-knacks. Harold called himself the 'Sharpening King'. In Queensland, Harold met and married Jean and, with their daughter Evelyn, they made a home in the tiny living quarters at the back of the truck. Following Harold's death, the tractor and wagon were sold to a second-hand dealer in Wangaratta who, in turn sold it to Peter and Wyn Herry who have cared for the outfit over the past 25 years. Thanks to the Herrys, Harold Wright's remarkable travelling home and workshop was saved for the National Historical Collection.

Denis Shephard

Society and Nation Program

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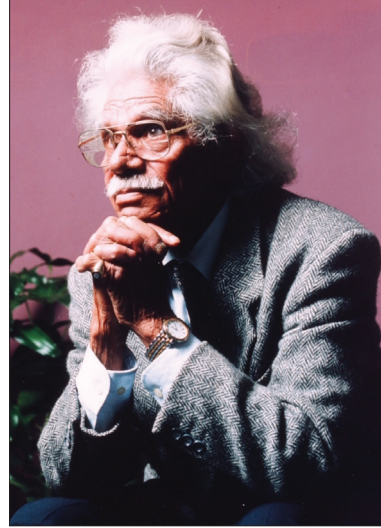
Canberra City

The **Neville Bonner** Collection

The National Museum of Australia has had the privilege of receiving a significant collection of material from Heather Bonner, the wife of the late Neville Bonner who passed away in February 1999 at 76 years of age. This collection contains significant objects such as Neville's spectacles, turquoise ring, Order of Australia Medal and framed certificate, handmade boomerang, Doctoral robe and bonnet, and his Bible used at his swearing into Parliament.



Neville Bonner throwing boomerangs in the Senate Gardens, Canberra, August 1971.
photo: Neville Bonner Collection



Portrait of Neville Bonner.
photo: Paul Wagner

Neville Bonner, an Aboriginal man of the Jagera people of south-east Queensland, played a significant role in gaining recognition and more respect for Aboriginal people across the country. Neville was a Liberal Party candidate and the first Aboriginal Senator to be elected into Federal Parliament, in 1971, where he advocated better conditions and rights for Aboriginal people. His career ranged from being a head stockman, to a construction worker, to a community spokesperson. Other significant achievements awarded to Neville included being named Australian of the Year in 1979 by the National Australia Day Council, and in 1984 receiving an Order of Australia medal.

The Museum is very excited at being able to showcase Neville's life and impact on both Aboriginal and Australian social history.

Neville Bonner swearing-in Holy Bible, after 1975 'win' before people of Queensland 'Lone Ticket', and gold rimmed glasses.
photo: Dean Golja

