

# Marquetry Matters



The Quarterly Newsletter of

The Marquetry Society of Victoria Inc. Reg. No. A0002470K ISSN 2207-5941

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No. 250

2020

## Issue No. 250

### Editorial

Issue No. 250 eh?! Wow!! Who would have thought 43 years ago that the Society would still be alive and well and still producing 'Marquetry Matters' after all this time?!

A time to celebrate? Wouldn't that be good! Unfortunately, with the world in the state that it is in currently, celebrating is not really an option. The COVID-19 virus is certainly testing all the world leaders. And no one knows nor can estimate how long it is going to last. The rate of increase worldwide is being referred to as the Hockey Stick analogy, or the J Curve or the Exponential Curve, all depending upon the readers' understanding.

With the recommendation that we all stay indoors as much as possible brings to mind the thought of 'balance'; you know, Yin and Yang, Black and White, Negative and Positive, Heads and Tails, etc.. The negative is that we are confined to our homes. But the positive is that we now have time to get on with some Marquetry – how about that!! What more encouragement do you need?!

On a more sober note, though, our worthy Hon. Sec. has had to broadcast the fact that all meetings and workshops are to be suspended until further notice. This is also where it hits home. But I like Chas' word 'suspended' rather than cancelled, somehow it doesn't seem so drastic and final!

As to whether there will be anything to report in the next issue of MM, even as to whether there will be an MM in three months' time is all up in the air. Here's hoping and praying that things will be looking up at that time but, at present, it looks as if we're in for a longer haul.

Then there's the theory going round the traps that the planet as a whole is being challenged and everyone is being 'called to arms'. This is a real Wake Up Call!! There is so much negativity around with wars and fighting not only internationally but locally as well. Maybe it is time to take stock of where we all are at and appreciate where others are at. There was a song written some time ago entitled "Where is the love?" Maybe we should encourage it to be the anthem of the day!

Hang in there everyone! Best wishes to all readers. Keep safe and well.

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**Member News**

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A blast from the past.....Chris Burch has come to life so to speak. He has been snowed under recently with house and contents disposal (I can relate to the latter problem!) and is renting temporarily (he hopes) in Dandenong. We reciprocate his best wishes and look forward to him returning to the fold in the not too distant future.

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**Got a Minute or Two** (Designed to keep the members informed who are unable to get to the meetings)

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I like the way our Hon. Sec. numerically lists all correspondence items in and out – it saves me from counting them! Over the past couple of months, though, a total of 24 items of inward and 4 of outward have kept him on his toes. It is sobering to see the number of events that we have been made aware of that have probably not eventuated (the pun is not intentional!) or will not eventuate.

One particular event that is/was scheduled for this coming May is as per the invitation following:

“Although some 34 years old, the Berwick District Woodworkers Club Inc. will shortly host its first ever woodworking exhibition. Held over the weekend of 2nd and 3rd of May 2020, the event will feature an exhibition and sale of members’ work, as well as numerous demonstrations and a kids’ corner. Entry is free, and tea & coffee will be available. The exhibition will be held in the Club’s recently completed new clubrooms and workshop, in the grounds of The Old Cheese Factory, a classified historic property located at 34 Homestead Rd., Berwick 3806.

A cordial invitation is extended to you and your fellow club members, and we would appreciate you bringing this invitation to their attention please”.

There is a flyer that provides more information. Here’s keeping our fingers crossed for them but I’d say that it’s pretty doubtful that it will go ahead. What a shame if it doesn’t.

Whether the display at the Nunawading Library went ahead I don’t know but I feel that the library would have been closed down like so many other ‘public’ activities. No one in authority has any idea how long the national shut-down is to last, some saying at least six months but whatever the duration the long-term effect is going to be enormous.

Hopefully we will still be able to mount an Xmas Show in December when the Competition Theme will be “Australiana’ with a maximum size this year of A3.

We’ve has a couple of ‘Show and Tells’: Chas demonstrated sand scorching and I showed some thin plywood as detailed below.

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**Dates for Your Diaries**

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There can be no dates to record! So many activities are being put on hold (even the Olympics!) that it will be interesting to see when we hear what is going to happen with the Royal Show and the Timber, Tools and Artisan Show. They all must be having to think of alternative measures!

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**The Contemporary Art Society of Victoria Inc. A4 Art Australia**

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After all my haranguing in the last issue of MM about the Contemporary Arts Society A4 Art Exhibition I believe that it is not on (was scheduled for March/April) as a result of the current coronavirus business. However it is not clear from their website whether it is on or off. They just say there are no current events!

But whilst on this subject I’ll record the availability of 1mm thick 3-ply from Float-A-Boat in Ringwood. I showed an example of this at the last meeting but was not inundated with requests for the A4 pieces I had to show! I bought a couple of sheets of it so can supply anyone interested. Between now and next year’s exhibition (hopefully!) we can prepare some work on this thin very stable board to be part of the A4 exhibition at last! You could still exhibit them at our next Xmas show, the thickness wouldn’t worry anyone. Think about it....!

## News from other Societies

### The Marquetry Society

We have received over the past few months Issues Nos. 269 and 270, being the Winter 2019 and Spring 2020 editions. I've not had the chance to review them yet but include below snapshots of the TOCs in order to whet your appetites!

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We also received from Alan Mansfield (Mansy) an acknowledgement of receipt of the last MM and a commentary on our Xmas Comp. and Exhibition. He was most generous in his praise of our efforts opining that the presentation was identical to theirs – most flattering! But when you think about effort per national capita I suppose we don't do so bad after all! Thanks Alan!

### The American Marquetry Society

Again I've not had a chance to check on where I'm at with the American magazines. I really will make an effort to detail them in the next issue of MM. And what happens today?.....Irena sends me the Spring 2020 edition! There's a message here I think! Thanks Irena.

## News from BHCAC

The BHCAC (Box Hill Community Art Centre) where we regularly meet issued the following memo to all groups and I was so impressed with their initiative in this trying period (where meeting places, etc. are closed down nation-wide) that I'm reproducing it in toto below:

Hello BHCAC Hirer Groups,

I hope you are doing well. We really miss not having you in the centre but would love to still stay connected with you all.

Box Hill Community Art Centre is running an initiative to lift spirits, enhance connection and inspire people to come into the present moment and create from home. We would love you to be part of it.

Developing a creative outlet is more important now than ever. Creativity is an essential aspect of our emotional and psychological wellbeing. Having projects or hobbies to consistently work on and dedicate our time to gives us a sense of purpose above and beyond regular responsibilities.

Studies show that being creative elevates your mood, alleviates anxiety, boosts brain function and increases your immune.

We'd love you to get on board, unleash your creative mojo and join us in our "April Art Challenge" as we spread a wave of positivity around our community.

Please forward this email on to all members of your group.

All you need to do is follow Box Hill Community Art Centre on Face Book and bhcac Instagram. You will be given challenges and inspiration. Please share and like our posts to inspire others.

Don't forget to tag your masterpieces #bhctogetherwecreate

For those left brainers out there reading this thinking – “I'm not creative”. We challenge you! By April 30 you will feel differently.

Hopefully we shall see you participating in the Challenge with us, and even better see you back in the centre as soon as we can.

Take care.

Warm regards,

The team at Box Hill Community Arts Centre.

Full marks, eh?!

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## A History of Intarsia and Marquetry

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When you come to think of it there can't be much 'new' in marquetry, whether it be method or materials. So I went back trawling, surfing, whatever way you call it, through very early editions of that wonderful production *The Marquetarian* and found the following which I felt is pretty comprehensive and as valid now as it was then (59 years ago!):-

From *The Marquetarian* Issue No. 36 Autumn 1961.

### HISTORY OF INTARSIA AND MARQUETRY

by S. H. MURRELL

Intarsia, the true inlay of wood, was developed in Italy in the early thirteenth century. It appears to have originated in Sienna, recognised by historians to be the birthplace or cradle of Italian wood carving and inlay. Later it was carried to other centres, particularly Florence, where much of the best intarsia work of the late fifteenth century was done. The work of the early craftsmen was confined almost exclusively to the adornment and decoration of church furniture, etc., and the most beautiful examples of the craft were to be found in the decoration of choir stalls, sacristy, doors, and panelling in many cathedrals throughout Italy, notably at Sienna, Perugia, Florence and Lucca. Later in seventeenth century Italy, intarsia was used for decorating household furniture rather than for panelling.

In the early period the intarsia designs took the form of the most graceful arabesques executed mainly in two colours, light on dark, or dark on light, but with the development of the craft elaborate perspectives, architectural buildings, street scenes, and cupboards with half-open doors through which could be seen the contents of shelves were amongst the subjects depicted with superb realism. Realism was achieved to some extent by the use of acid solutions and stains for tinting the wood to obtain variety of colour, and by scorching for rounding and shading effects, for there was not then the wide variety and colour range of natural woods that is available to contemporary craftsmen today. Some indication of the range of chosen subjects and the excellence of the work of these early craftsmen is given in an account by Matteo Colaccio (1486), in which he says, " In past days in visiting those intarsiad figures, I was so much taken with the exquisiteness of the work that I could not withhold myself from praising the authors to heaven! . . . Here are books expressed in tarsia that seem real. Some are one on the other, and arranged carelessly, or by chance, some closed, some newly bound, . . . Elsewhere one sees clouds of smoke which spread out from new chimneys, fish which tum round from a full basket . . . Palaces, towers, and churches, through the half-closed doors of which one can see in the interior arches and windows, cupolas and steps . . . But what shall I say of the images of the saints . . . Of their uncut and curled beards, of their hands, the joints of their fingers, their nails? Of their clothes, their sinuous folds, and the shadows?. . . Then round the angel Gabriel and the most pious mother one admires branches with such fruit and twigs that nature does not make them more true. And this is specially admirable, that through the dull colour of their leaves they seem to have been taken from the tree scarcely a day ago."

There is little information recorded concerning the tools used by the Italian craftsmen. In an Austrian museum at Vienna, however, there are examples of the work of one Antonio Barili, one of the best of the fifteenth century craftsmen, and on one of the panels exhibited Barili has made a portrait of himself at work which shows the tools of this master to consist of a short-bladed, long-handled knife, a square-handled gouge, and a pocket knife. The long-handled knife is held in the left hand against the shoulder,

which is used to push the knife in cutting. In the right hand he holds a pencil, with which he appears to guide the knife edge. Simple tools with which to produce such exquisite work!

A good deal of inlay work was done in Spain during the 13th-16th centuries but little of it has survived. It naturally had a Moorish influence since the southern part of the country was held so long by the Moors. In the museum at South Kensington there are some panels with Hispano-Moresque geometric inlays made in the fifteenth century. The ground is of chestnut with bone inlays, some stained a green colour. Metal triangles and light wood were also used or inlaying. The use of bone in conjunction with black and light coloured woods is characteristic of Spanish work of the period. The panels at South Kensington are very attractive, but generally speaking the Spanish designs were naive and the work did not compare with the work of the early Italians. In Spain and Portugal, especially the latter, it was the practice to decorate furniture with metal plates, cut and pierced into elaborately fancy patterns. These were fastened to the surface of articles of furniture made of dark wood by means of small pins. This method of decorating furniture may have been the origin of metal marquetry, so well-known a little later under the name of "Boulle Work."

Intarsia and marquetry was popular in Germany during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, mainly in South German towns and particularly in Augsburg and Nuremberg. It was chiefly used as an adornment on furniture and architectural woodwork. The designs most frequently employed were of architectural and perspective subjects, but elaborate arabesques, floral pieces, views of towns, and historical compositions were also made. In the latter half of the sixteenth century German craftsmen turned their attention to marquetry work in ebony and ivory, and soon their productions were being exported to 11 parts of the world. During the seventeenth century it became the vogue in South Germany, especially in Bavaria, to ornament musical instruments and weapons with inlays of ivory, mother-of-pearl and metals.

The use of marquetry for the decoration of cabinets, sideboards, doors, and to a lesser degree panelling, spread to Holland during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and the reputation of the Dutch craftsmen quickly spread throughout Europe. Artistic designs embodying flowers, sprigs of leaves, birds and animals were used with great effect. In the second half of the seventeenth century Dutch commerce had made available to the marquetry craftsmen a much wider variety of woods which is reflected in the work of that period, which was much bolder in design and more gay in colour.

Inlay work generally seems to have had but a minor influence in England, though during the reign of William and Mary this country shared with France and Holland a fashion for chairs elaborately decorated with inlaid designs. Marquetry appeared in a developed state in the reign of Charles II. Many beautiful cabinet woods were used at this period in the making of furniture which was richly decorated with marquetry designs employing tulips and other flowers, trees, foliage and birds, etc., in bright colours. Ivory and mother-of-pearl were sometimes used for salient points like eyes, and perspective and shading was achieved by heating or scorching in sand. Examples of the work of this period may be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and at Kensington.

It was in France, however, that the most elaborate marquetry was produced. Jean Mace of Blois, a sculptor and painter, who had learned the craft in the Netherlands, is believed to have been the first to introduce marquetry into France. He was given the title "menuisier et faiseur de cabinets et tableaux en marquerie de bois," and he lived and worked in the Louvre in Paris from 1644 until 1672.

Mace's daughter married Pierre Boulle, uncle of Andre Charles Boulle, who many years later achieved world fame as a marquetry craftsman. The early seventeenth century French designs were of picturesque landscapes, ancient ruins and figures. The veneers used were occasionally tinted and scorched to obtain colour and shading effects. Ebony and ivory were amongst other materials frequently used. About the middle of the seventeenth century furniture enriched with elaborate marquetry in tortoiseshell and copper became very popular and fashionable throughout France. The name of the Boulle family was closely associated with this new technique, so much so that it became known and is of course still known today as "Boulle Marquetry" and "Buhl" work.

Andre Charles Boulle was the most accomplished craftsman of this talented family. He took up residence in the Louvre in succession to Jean Mace in 1672, where orders from the court of Louis XIV completely absorbed his work. His designs were most elaborate and consisted chiefly of flowing arabesques, intricate scrolls and screwed marquetry which were worked in metal on tortoiseshell or tortoiseshell on metal.

Ebony, rosewood and oak were used as the foundation or base, cabinets, escritorios, tables and other articles of furniture were decorated in this manner, which were further enriched with sumptuous mounts in ormolu and gilt. Boulle did not confine himself wholly to this technique and at intervals throughout his life produced some beautiful marquetry consisting solely of wood veneers. He died in 1732. Other world famous names associated with French marquetry include J. F. Ocben, .T. Henry Rusener and David Roentgen. Roentgen was one of many German born craftsmen who, in the middle of the eighteenth century migrated to France to follow and perfect their craft. J. F. Ocben, a pupil of Andre Charles Boulle, became a master of his craft. Many examples of his work may still be seen. A small writing table made by him for Louis XV was sold at Christie's Auction Rooms in London recently for £34,000-the highest price was realised for a marquetry antique. There is another fine example of Ocben's work in the Wallace Collection - a magnificent roll-top desk made between 1760 and 1769 for King Stanislas Lesczynski of Poland. J. H. Rusener collaborated with Ocben in the production of this masterpiece, which is veneered on oak with beautiful marquetry in pear sycamore, burr walnut, purpleheart and holly.

Marquetry disappeared during the struggle with France, due no doubt to the fact that it was a very expensive mode of decorating furniture. In recent years, however, it has been revived in the form of marquetry pictures, and more and more people are finding that this artistic craft still holds the fascination it has held for hundreds of years. There is no doubt but that this fascination springs from the deep satisfaction that can be derived from making with nature's own materials, natural veneers, pictures of beauty, warmth and charm. This history is of necessity brief, but it is hoped that enough has been written to still further stimulate the interest and enthusiasm of members in the Society's endeavours to preserve and advance the ancient and beautiful craft of marquetry.

### Quiz Time Answers

From the questions in the September 2019 MM....:

1. Beech; 2. Elder; 3. Pear; 4. Spruce; 5. Weeping Willow; 6. Fir; 7. Laurel (and Hardy)
8. Plane; 9. Ash; 10. Pine; 11. Apple; 12. Oak; 13. Birch; 14. Palm; 15. Yew; 16. Sycamore;
17. Blackbutt; 18. Basswood; 19. Boxwood; 20. Utile; 21. Kingwood; 22. Satinwood; 23. Hemlock.
24. Aspen; 25. Pop(u)lar; 26. Olive, Cherry, Myrtle, Willow, Sheoak or Dragonwood !!!

### Odds & Ends

I had already included the design for this issue when this sketch came into my computer from a friend in the village. I just couldn't resist putting it in.....! From every adversity can come a smile!

Ship-wrecked? – No Sir!

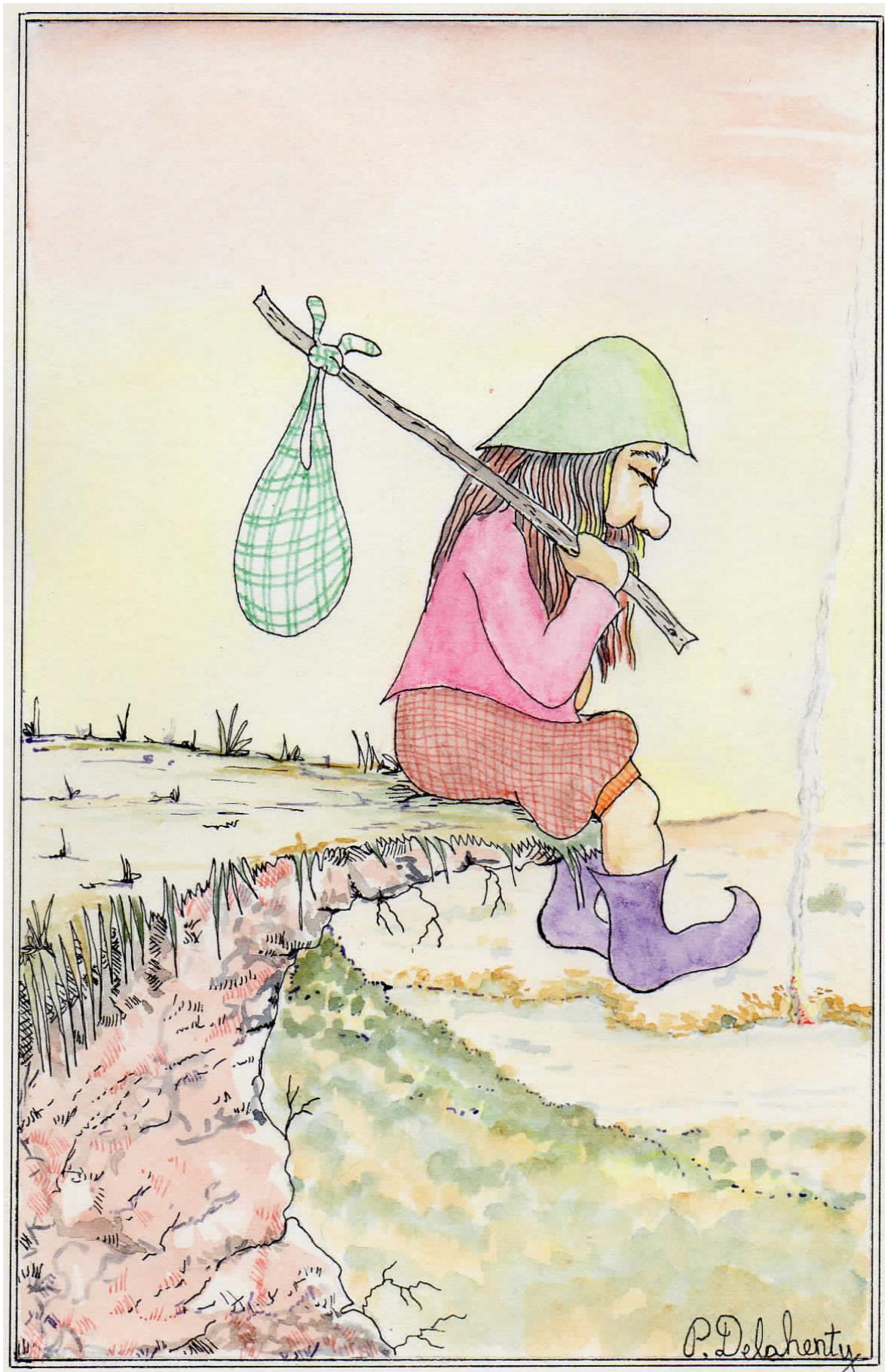
*Dance like no one is watching.  
Love like you have never been hurt.  
Laugh like you've never laughed before.*





**This Month's Design**

I came across this delightful picture somewhere and think it would make a beautiful marquetry subject. I googled P. Delehenty and believe he may be from the eastern suburbs of Melbourne – I trust he would agree!



## **THE MARQUETRY SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC**

The aim of our non-profit Society is to promote and foster interest in the art and craft of marquetry.

Meetings are held at the  
Box Hill Community Arts Centre,  
Cnr. Combarton and Station Streets, Box Hill,  
Melways 47 D11

on the fourth Saturday of the month 12.30pm to  
3.30pm with hands-on workshops on the second  
Saturday of the month, same time.

Hands-on workshops are held on Tuesday  
afternoon of each month 1pm to 3pm, at the  
Scout Hall, Cnr. Station Street and Heathmont Road,  
Heathmont. Melways 50-A11

Phone anyone to check times.

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### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE SOCIETY**

Direct all enquires to the Secretary.  
An annual membership fee of \$40 and a  
joining fee of \$6 apply.

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## **MARQUETRY MATTERS**

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Other marquetry associations are welcome to  
use this material provided credit is given to  
author, source and issue number.

### **Other Elected Office Bearers**

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Librarian	Jan Slagter
BHCAC Rep.	Charles Watt
CWC Rep.	Chris Burch
Webmaster	Chris Burch

### **MEETING & WORKSHOP DATES**

**coming up**  
**SATURDAY 12.30 to 3.30 P.M.**  
**@ BOX HILL**

Temporarily Suspended!