

Yes - the theme was measures - and the congratulations are in !

At last, after two years of work and waiting, the 2016 conference arrived, packed with activities from mid-day Friday to late on Sunday afternoon. The speakers program featured well known authorities from around Australia and overseas. For those with the stamina, the conference venue offered easy transport by tram to all the major antiquing and art venues in Melbourne, as well as a relaxed atmosphere and spacious rooms. This year, the conference was spread over a larger area, and the seating in the main lecture room made for easy viewing of all presentations.

Also in the main lecture room were the conference sales table, raffle choices, and a number of activities and exhibits. Refreshments were served in a separate break-out area, which made for pleasant leg-stretching and lots of room for chatting and exploring purchases or samples.

Extra-conference Activities

For prudent early arrivers, Friday afternoon offered two activities - the Melbourne Costume Collection at Yarra Park, or ScienceWorks just across the Westgate Bridge to view an 1887 Adelaide Exhibition Display by Needlemaker William Bartleet & Sons.

Later that afternoon, those interstate and non-metro attendees staying at the hotel shared a cocktail evening with many of the Melbourne members. Committee members from SA, NSW, and Victoria also met late in the afternoon to discuss a variety of ideas and issues common to all members.

Saturday - Sparkling Speakers

The conference proper kicked off on Saturday, with a welcome from President Jan Harris and an explanation of the various competitions and activities being run through the two days. First lecturer was Queenslander **Dixie Middleton**, who talked about *The Champions Embroiders*, two Queenslanders stitching in the 1920s-1930s when agricultural shows paid prize money. Both ladies kept their families going through the Depression with their fantastic work and their ag show prizes.



(left) Dixie Middleton



(right) *The Champions*: Elsie Wright and Mary Dwyer

Next up was American **Terry Meinke**, an expert on *Avery needlecases* who spoke in detail in two sessions, one before lunch and the other after. Terry has taken a careful research approach to what had been common if delightful needlework tools, and has expanded our knowledge with details on the range of makers and sellers, as well as patents and other manufacturing information.



(left) Terry Meinke

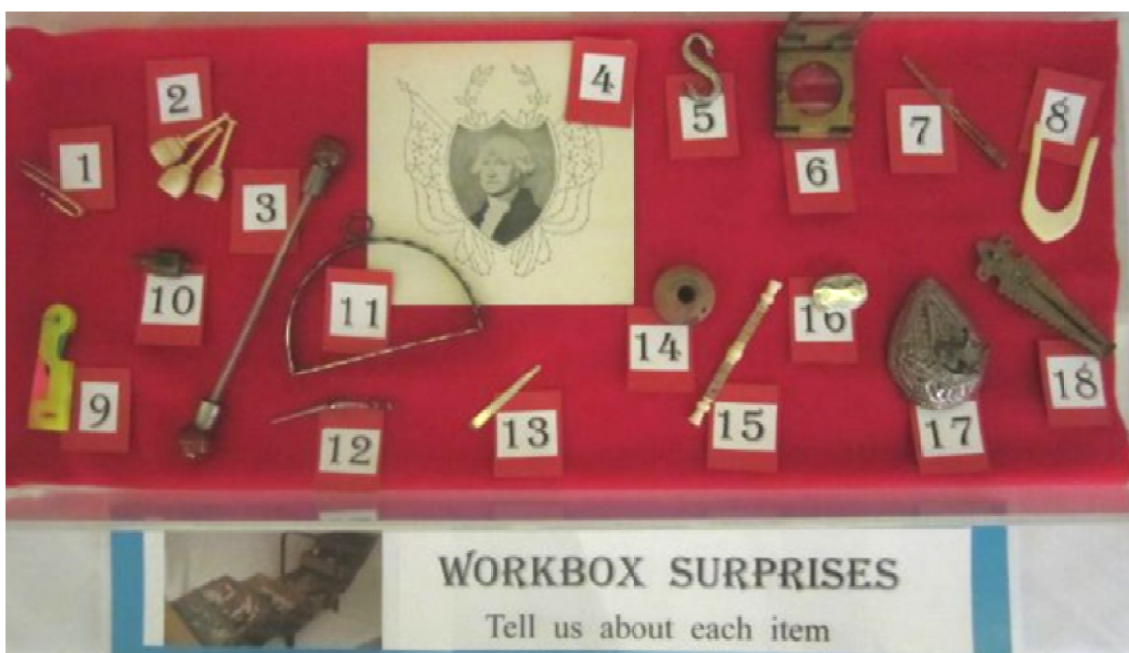


Avery Butterfly Needlecase (left)



Avery Butterfly with added decoration (right)

During the tea breaks on Saturday, NTCSA also ran a competition “**Workbox Surprises**”, inviting all to identify and explain a range of items sometimes found in old workboxes or travelling sets. A brief presentation during the afternoon explained each tool - a learning experience for all. Of 18 items presented, one entry had no definitive explanation, and two were incorrectly identified in the answer slides. Organiser Susan Webster said the greatest fun is learning more, and she thanked those able to give additional information about the various curios.



Final daytime speaker on Saturday was **Nicole Jenkins** who talked about *Sizing on ready-to-wear garments*, and how the actual measurements had varied over the last 150 years to reflect social expectations and community taste.



Nicole Jenkins

Only two hours after the end of the Saturday conference activity, almost all of us, plus several husbands and partners, re-entered the Boulevard Room, now transformed into a formal dinner setting. After Dinner speaker was **Michele Hill**, Adelaide author of many books on aspects of William Morris and creator of patchwork and needlework designs reflecting the Morris style, as well as many other influences.



Michele Hill

Sunday

Back into the lecture theatre at 9am for a presentation by NTCSA member **Nicci Kissane**, talking about her native state in *Tasmania - History and Stitchery*.

Then, after tea, was the sales mall - an hour and 15 minutes of retail therapy - "not long enough" cried several first-time attendees who had not previously been exposed to such availability of tools, haberdashery, and related items.

By closing time at the mall, all members expressed themselves replete with new purchases and new knowledge. For-sale items, as always, ranged through all prices and eras. For every expensive treasure, there was equal pleasure in smaller items. Whilst packing up, one collecting maven shared her favourite find with another : a pair of infants socks, still stamped with the UK

manufacturer's name, T. Morley Haberdashery Depot. The socks had been unsold stock at the closure of Abikair's Department Store in Albury-Wodonga in the 1950's. The second lady, mistakenly thinking they were being shown for sale, instantly offered to buy the socks for *The Cavalcade of History and Fashion* in Sydney. 'Twas not to be – they went home with their discoverer, a knitting specialist.



After lunch, our final speaker was Melbourne Member **Susan Webster** who wrapped up “The Theme is Measures” with a talk *on Australian-made measures and rules*.

The final activity for the day was the announcement of the new name for the newsletter, *NTCSA Snippets*, and the announcement of prize winners and the drawing of raffles.

To close, organisers announced the 2018 venue would be in Sydney, hopefully at the popular Harbourview Hotel in North Sydney.