

Waverley Prize

Bendigo Senior Secondary College has continued to award the Waverley Essay Prize – an award presented since 1878. The prize takes its name from the Waverley novels written by the immensely popular Sir Walter Scott. Ravenswood Homestead, near Bendigo, takes its name from one of the most famous of these novels, *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

Betty Stuart, a volunteer with the Bendigo Historical Society, won the Waverley Prize in 1948. The image with this article shows Bendigo High School prefects of 1949. Betty Stuart is in the front row first on the left. The following is her winning essay:

‘The Best Things in Life’

How often have we read, have we heard, have we seen, that we are living in an unhappy world? What can life hold, we ask ourselves, for people living in a world of want and bloodshed, where hate predominates and brotherly love is seemingly, dead. Is there anything good and beautiful left? If so where shall we find it? Then we realize that, although there is much disorder and strife, the best things are still with us, if only if we are willing to look for them. They are with us all the time if only we are willing to appreciate. There is no expense connected with the best things in life, for the best things, the really best things are free. No one need pay for true companionship. What is better than that? The love of a friend is more precious than the greatest treasure ever known.

Do we stop to think what pleasure we gain from happy occupation? There is no satisfaction like that gained from doing a job and doing it to the best of our ability. Whether it is school work, digging stones from a quarry, or governing a country, if the work is done well the worker is happy. Often we think how pleasant it would be to do nothing but enjoy ourselves, but look at any or woman whose only occupation is attending parties and social gatherings. Do they look happy? No! There is only discontent and weariness written on their faces. Then there are the arts – music, painting, literature and sculpture. How much pleasure they give, both to the artist and to the world! Poetry which preserves the poet’s memory forever, is full of his joy and sadness, his loves and hates and is a source of pleasure to people everywhere and at every time. A beautiful picture, a lovely bar of music, a graceful piece of statuary – they all add something to life which before it had lacked.

But where do we find such complete happiness as in our own homes and in our daily life? Although we sometimes take it for granted, we regard our homes as rocks – rocks to which we

can always return, assured of safety and welcome. To a young man or young woman setting out on the journey through life, home is more than a rock, it is a haven. It is always there in the background, its influence quietly helping to mould his character, the thought of it urging him to be a better person.

What our world lacks so much today is kindness, courtesy and thoughtfulness for others. In a busy period in a city when the one thought is 'every man for himself', the action of a boy or girl in helping an elderly person across a road, in giving a seat to an adult, is appreciated by all, although they may not appear to notice. It is only a little act, but it shows thoughtfulness and thoughtfulness is appreciated. But hovering above all these great things in life is the greatest thing in life – love! Love Of God, love of parents, love of neighbour, love of nation. A world based on love would be a world of peace. War would vanish, man would live peacefully with man, lust and greediness would vanish, never to return. Great statesmen meet and committees are formed to discover the best way of preserving peace and perhaps they know in their hearts that their task is hopeless unless there is more love in the world. What loss of life could have been avoided through love. Twice in less than half a century the world has divided, lives which may have accomplished great things in peace were ruthlessly destroyed in war. Had men thought of the enemy as a man, alive and full of the joy of living would they have killed him? There was no understanding and so there was war. How hard it is for the selfish person to understand the reasons of missionaries and doctors in leaving home and comfort to venture into danger among people they have never seen. Such people have no thought of comfort and enjoyment. They see only the plight of other human beings and gladly they go to do what they can to help.

All the great things in life spring from love – religion which is love of God, freedom which is love between nations, the glories of nature which is God's love revealed to us. The best things in life are free - that is free as regards money, but freedom and peace, the greatest things the world lacks today can only be gained by the work and endeavour of all, not only statesmen – everyone from kings to the least insignificant subject. Then and only then, when we are all working together with love and goodwill, will peace come to the world.

