

Coat stitched from **SUGAR BAGS**



Photo courtesy Axel Stenross Museum

This coat was made out of sugar bags during the Depression. The coat is held by the Axel Stenross Maritime Museum in Port Lincoln. It was hand-sewn by Frank Laaksa, a sailmaker who came out to Australia with Axel Stenross from Finland in 1927 on the *Olivebank* and stayed with him to help set up and run his boatbuilding business. The original printing on the sugar

bag can still be seen: *Pure Sugar, 70 lbs.*

The coat is a “State Treasure” because it is an example of workers’ clothing from the Depression, which is not well covered by museums; because it represents ingenuity in improvising to help make ends meet, and because it has been made with some skill - evident in the stitching

and the button holes. It helps illustrate the parlous nature of the boatbuilding trade in Port Lincoln during the 1930s and brings home in a graphic way just how much the Depression was a struggle for survival for ordinary people.

Geoff Speirs