

CAULFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter No. 40

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P.O. Box 202 CAULFIELD SOUTH, 3162

Editor: Gladys Vallati
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The Society is affiliated with the Royal Historical Society

NEWSLETTER PRINTED TWICE YEARLY - APRIL AND OCTOBER

The Society meets on the third Wednesday of each month (except December and January) in the Committee Room, first floor, City Hall, at 7.30 p.m.

PATRON -His Worship the Mayor of Caulfield - Cr. James Barrett



PRESIDENT *Mrs. F.E. Campbell 523 9228*

SECRETARY *Miss H. Ford 528 4140*

TREASURER *Miss N. Ward 523 5308*

A HISTORY OF THE ALMA CLUB

The Sand Dune

In the early years of last century, venturesome travellers proceeding from the little village of Melbourne to Gipps Land would often end their first day's journey at the big sand dune.

This was a pleasant spot at the junction of the road to Dandenong and the Wattle tree track to Gardiner's Creek. There were clean sand hills here and a sparkling little stream of fresh water, where Orrong Crescent now curves its way. There were plenty of fish in the stream, good grazing for the oxen and horses, and an abundance of game with the countless black duck and kangaroos.

The sheltered area of the big sand dune provided a pleasant spot for the first night's camp. The travellers could obtain rest and refreshment here, and it was always a relief to get away from the St Kilda Road and its bushranger infested swamps and scrub.

The road to Dandenong broadened at its junction with the Wattle tree Road, and was lined with immense gum trees, the home of thousands of colourful parrots and cockatoos. Amid the sand dunes were numerous springs of crystal clear water and this was the main factor inducing settlement and the introduction of farming and grazing in the area.

The Port Phillip District of New South Wales, as Victoria was then known, progressed very slowly and the district around the big sand dune remained thinly settled for many years.

Gold!!!

Gold had been discovered at Bathurst in New South Wales and it seemed that Port Phillip District would lose what little population it had with the rush to the goldfields. But in 1861, gold was discovered in huge quantities at Mt. Alexander, Ballarat, Warrandyte and Bendigo, and the population of Victoria (as it was named soon afterwards) increased by 400,000 in five years

The Formative Years

With the growth in building, there was a big demand for sharp, clean sand, and the big sand hills near Dandenong Road were soon denuded. However, it was found that the sand was in considerable depth, and before long, the sand hills had become sandpits and were eventually abandoned. The former resting place for travellers and its idyllic setting degenerated into an ugly rubbish tip.

The Melbourne *Daily Telegraph* published boastful articles about the growth of Caulfield, Malvern and Elsternwick in the 1880's and early 90's, and even in the disastrous years following the bursting of the land boom in 1893, the district continued to grow and became more solidly established.

The Vision Splendid

In the early 1900's, the unsightly rubbish tip was purchased by Mr.R.H. Mundell - a man of vision with a great capacity for work. He

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filled the sand pits in, levelled the site and created a bowling green and tennis courts. The Newspapers of the time printed paeans of praise applauding the venture as "one of the finest and best equipped sports grounds around Melbourne".

A Bowling and Tennis Club was formed on the first day of November, 1913. It was decided to name the new club **The Alma Bowling and Tennis Club** because of its location close to Alma Road. Shortly after its foundation, the club added to its development a Croquet section.

1914-1918

Less than a year later the Great War erupted and like all sporting clubs the infant Alma Club had to severely curtail its activities. One interesting fact emerging from those dark and dreary years was the gesture of the Club in staging the newfangled outdoor moving pictures in aid of patriotic funds.

The projector was situated in a shed on the northern side overlooking the green, and until 1974 the small rectangular aperture through which the projectionist showed his flickers was a noticeable feature of the northern wall. The screen for the movies was erected in front of the old green grandstand.

Following the Armistice of 1918, the Club resumed its activities and began to prosper with good team representation in bowls and tennis. About 1924, Mr. Mundell sold the Club to a Mr. Murdock. Membership was increasing all the time and in the ensuing years many members began to dislike the idea of the Alma Club being privately owned.

1927

So, in September, 1927, the members bought the Club from Mr. Murdock. It was a courageous and momentous move and those members of fifty years ago are deserving of commendation for their far sightedness.

Naturally enough, human nature being what it is, the new venture did not experience all smooth sailing. There were differences of opinion, resignations and withdrawals; but despite these difficulties the Club kept on growing.

In January 1938, the Club amended its Articles of Association to allow the admittance of fifty Squash Rackets Members. Members of this new section would have to pay one guinea entrance fee and an annual subscription of one guinea.

Only a month later, the General Committee agreed to purchase a cash register for an amount not exceeding sixty-five pounds. Things were really looking up; in the same year it was decided to open the bar from 10a.m. Monday to Friday.

Then once again, Australia was at war and the Club began to diminish its activities and growth. An interesting motion carried in 1944 was that the Honour Boards be photographed and printed thereof, together with copies of each Annual Report and Balance Sheet be lodged for safe keeping with the Club's solicitor or bankers.

Expansion

The club began to really grow after the Second World War, so much so that membership of the various sections was strictly limited and many applications for membership were rejected on various grounds.

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The Alma Club began to be regarded as somewhat exclusive and membership was something to be sought and treasured.

In the forties and early fifties, there was much talk of expansion. It was even proposed that the Club purchase all the houses between its southern boundary and Alma Road but, unfortunately, nothing eventuated. Another proposal was that the Club purchase a house or houses on the western boundary and build a clubhouse there but, again, nothing was done.

After much debate and long and involved discussions, varying amounts were spent on repairing and maintaining the old clubhouse, which was really showing its age. More money was expended on the ladies lounge, on electrical fitting and plumbing, and on alterations and extensions to the bar. But there was some feeling that these were only palliatives postponing the day when something definite would have to be done about the clubhouse and environs.

Endeavour

Owing to the disastrous drought of 1964, this feeling became more evident with the advent of new blood in executive positions. Some bold spirits advocated drilling for water to try and save the Alma green, which was fast becoming a diminishing asset.

The history of the area indicated that the pioneers and travellers in Australia's early years, had a high regard for the purity of the water in this locality. The venturesome people won the day, test bores were sunk and an unfailing supply of the

purest water in Australia was revealed. The crystal clear water which had attracted travellers to the big sand dune was once again bestowing its benisons.

In 1971, all the doubts and difficulties about the clubhouse were resolved; for it was destroyed by fire.

The General Committee acted quickly and a splendid temporary clubhouse was erected in a matter of days. Good friends at Elsternwick Club and Caulfield Central RSL welcomed all Alma Members and Albert Park V.R.I. Bowls Club made its green available for their bowls pennant games. It was a wonderful example of warm hearted mateship.

Then after some delays, a start was made on the erection of a new clubhouse and once again the history of the sand dune manifested itself. Shortly after excavations for the foundations commenced, workers discovered a spring of bounteous clear water.

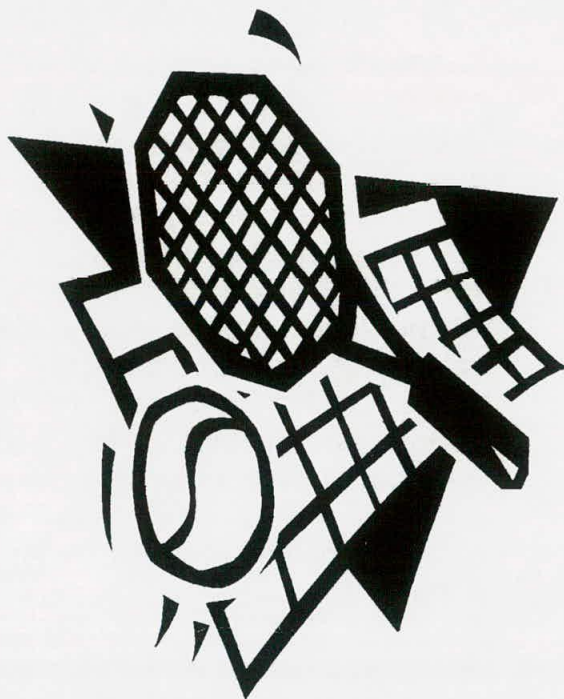
At the time, Victoria was suffering yet another bad drought, and it was a paradoxical situation to have severe water restrictions imposed by the Board of Works while thousands of gallons were flowing to waste along the gutters of Wilks Street and Alma Road.

After some delays work resumed on the excavations, only to uncover several more springs of good water. It was an embarrassment of riches and big canvas hoses were run out to dispose of the water. People near by were taking buckets to obtain water from such a plenteous supply, as the drought still continued.

4.

The new clubrooms were completed in 1972 and formally opened in October 1972.

Immediately afterwards, the club's membership began to increase with a big influx of social members. The Bowls, Tennis and Squash Sections also expanded, and the character of the Club changed from a small intimate organisation to a booming, vigorous entity. In September 1977, it was fifty years since the purchase of the Club from Mr. Murdock. The surroundings of today are a far cry from the big sand dune of last century and the noisome rubbish tip in the early 1900s.



OBITUARY - BETTY SNOWBALL

Miss Betty Snowball died on Wednesday, June 15th, 1994. Betty joined the Caulfield Historical Society in its early years and was appointed a Committee member and for many years served as a Vice-President.

Her knowledge of the history of the area was vast; she lived her entire life in Gladstone Parade, Elsternwick. Her grandfather Snowball had been Member of Parliament for Brighton, and her grandfather Kirkham was a Caulfield Councillor, Shire President in 1892 and Mayor in 1905.

Betty was educated in Elsternwick and was Prefect and Dux of the F.J. Cato branch of Methodist Ladies College (now Wesley College) in 1939. In her youth she was an ice skater and played tennis until a few months ago.

She became widely involved in voluntary community affairs - Regent Lodge Auxiliary, Ripponlea, Citizens Advice Bureau, Caulfield Residents' Association, a kindergarten and the Old Collegians Association.

Betty was a candidate for Caulfield elections in 1984. In 1993 Betty Snowball was awarded the honour of Caulfield Citizen of the Year

The Caulfield Historical Society and many others will miss Betty greatly.

Carnegie Progress Association

Contribution from Alf Jones

The attached notes about the Carnegie Progress Association which is now defunct, after about 50 years, were prepared at my request by Mr. Joseph Cripps, who has resided in Carnegie for many years - his address is 63 Belsize Avenue, Carnegie.

There were four Life Governors of the Association of whom Mr. Cripps is the only one surviving, the other three being Mr. Jack Muirhead, Mr. Roy Kerr and Mrs. Dot Muirhead. Mr Cripps was also a Foundation Member and a Foundation Trustee.

Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.)

This was formed during the period of the Second World War 1939-1945 and its function is well known. When this organization was disbanded a small number of people in the Carnegie area decided to form a Book Club which was very popular at the time.

Book Club - Period Middle 1940's

This Club comprised people from the A.R.P. days in Carnegie and met regularly at the various homes of the members. Books were supplied to members to take home and read. They were then discussed at the next meeting. After a period of time one of the ladies in the area attended a meeting to explain her idea of a home help scheme. This was well received, so it was decided to close down the Book Club and start on a business-like basis the Carnegie & District Social Services Association.

Carnegie & District Social Services Association - Period Late 1940's

After this Association was formed with office-bearers, in a business-like manner, an approach was made to the Caulfield City Council for financial assistance in the way of a subsidy and the Council agreed to do this. The Home Help scheme went ahead and was very successful and very popular in the district.

After about two years the Council decided to start their own scheme for the whole of the Caulfield area and it was felt that the organization, as such, was no longer necessary. It was then agreed upon by the members to close down the Association and to name it the Carnegie Progress Association.

Carnegie Progress Association - Period late 1940's to early 1990's

This Association was formed with a full set of rules which were printed in book form. The officers were agreed upon, such as President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, etc. The funds of the Social Services Association were transferred to the Progress Association but the amount involved was not large. The annual member's subscription was fixed at two shillings & six pence, and it is interesting to note that in 1990 it was only 50 cents.

The Caulfield Council was informed of the Association being formed and, after discussion, offered to transfer a wooden hut, used at the Town Hall grounds in the war years, to a block of land owned by the Council in Truganini Road, Carnegie. It was erected on that part of the block now in use as the Carnegie Children's Centre with a difference. The

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wooden hut has been replaced by a very modern building.

After the Association had used the hut for a few years the Council decided to build a brick building at the back of the block and called it the Carnegie Progress Hall. It was then leased to the Carnegie Progress Association at a nominal monthly rental and was controlled by the five Association members as named in the lease.

Over the years the Trustees sub-let the Hall to many organizations who were charged a rent which covered all the costs of running the Hall, paying for Gas, Electricity, etc.

After forty years of existence the number of Members of the Association dwindled to only a few, so it was decided to close down and hand the running of the Hall back to the Council.

The funds of the Association were also passed over to the Council. The Hall is currently used by the Caulfield Arts Complex and also on the same block is a large brick building used by "Meals on Wheels".

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On 21st September at the 22nd annual meeting the Mayor, Cr. James Barrett, Patron of the Caulfield Historical Society, installed the Office-Bearers and Committee for the ensuing year..

As the nominations received did not exceed the number of vacancies the following persons were elected unopposed at a meeting held on 17th August 1994 :-

President	Mrs. F. Campbell
Vice President	Mrs. G. Vallati
Treasurer	Miss N. Ward
Secretary	Miss H. Ford

General Committee

Mr. A. Reid
Mr. A. Anderson
Miss H. Bullock
Dr. M. Chennells
Mr. T. Vitale

Regional Delegates

Miss H. Bullock
Dr. M. Chennells

The Editor craves your pardon for the late issue of this Newsletter. You may notice the changed format and the different type face - all this means that I have done a great deal of learning of the new system of word processing. In addition the Editor did spend an enjoyable vacation in Queensland



Postscript:- Subsequent to Council amalgamations some discussions have taken place with the City of Moorabbin Historical Society. Six or seven of their members will join us after the first half hour of our meeting which is scheduled for Wednesday, 15th February, 1995 at 7.30 p.m.