

NEWSLETTER

Progress Associations

Ringwood's Voice of the Citizen



Above: The Western entrance to Ringwood with obvious damage to the road. This was just one of the issues that the progress associations pursued.

Long before the official creation of Progress Associations in Ringwood, there were a number of committees or groups set up, at various times, to discuss problems of local interest, while attempting to look after the welfare of the district. The first meeting of a progress association took place in May 1889, under the name of the



NEXT MEETING - 23 NOVEMBER 2010

John Murphy is a Associate Professor at the Melbourne University Australian Centre, Historical Studies. He has completed a number of studies, mainly centred around life after institutions, a history of poverty through the eyes of the St Vincent de Paul Society and group interviews of low-income Australians.

For the next meeting, he will talk on the social history since the Second World War, with emphasis on welfare and policies.

Left: A/Prof John Murphy

The year that was!

How quickly the year has gone again! We've had a great group of speakers at our meetings, and a terrific spread of cake and tea afterwards.

My personal thanks to all the helpers - from the hardworking committee, to the raffle sellers and the "tea ladies", the archivists and too many others to mention - without whom the Society would not exist.

May you and your families enjoy the Christmas season, and I hope to see you next year refreshed and relaxed.

-Russ Haines, editor

Ringwood Progress League, and met in Thomas Grant's blacksmith shop. As Ringwood was still the south-west riding in the Lillydale Shire, together with limited budgets and the use of labour-intensive equipment, it was often the case that the Shire did not fix many things, often leaving it to the residents. Many of the early issues were to do with road maintenance, drainage and lighting around public places. (cont.)

RINGWOOD'S PROGRESS ASSOCIATIONS (CONT.)

During WWI, and afterwards for a number of years, the Progress League went into abeyance. It was resurrected in the early 1920s and published an annual report on their activities. In 1923 the report talked about a public meeting called to propose to build a new High School, possible on Mrs Pratt's land. Also the matters of a railway station at Heatherdale, the purchase of Mrs Dawes 14-acre property for recreational purposes, the bad condition of Wantirna Road and - the biggest news - of electrification of the railway.

This was an amazing amount of activity for a non-Government organisation, which probably led to the justification of Ringwood breaking away from Lillydale and forming the Borough of Ringwood the next year.

Other progress associations formed after WWI. Ringwood East Progress Association was very active and was responsible for resolving many issues, as well the formation of the East Ringwood Tennis Club, the Football Club, next door, in 1930 and the railway station.

The North Ringwood Progress Association reformed in 1950, while Ringwood South Progress League was active in 1924. Heathmont Progress Association had many achievements but the creation of the railway station was their biggest.

Even after the Borough of Ringwood formed, the Progress Associations continued to be active for many years until the last disappeared in the 1960s/70s. In hind-sight, groups are still formed to address issues and one wonders if the need for a progress association is still there.

MELBA OF RINGWOOD

We can be assured that Nellie Mitchell, Australia's Melba, passed many times through Ringwood, from her place at Coldstream into Melbourne. Maybe it was for a trip to Europe, visiting acquaintances or to give a concert. There are two stories of Melba's connection with Ringwood.

It was always an event when Melba drove through Ringwood, as she made liberal use of the distinctive horn on her very large car. Miss Paddock, who lived in Thanet Street and later had a long association with Ringwood Primary School, was taken as a child on regular visits to the then thriving Ringwood Market. On one particular visit, she heard the sound of the horn of Melba's car and recognized the great singer as she swept into the market. However no one else did and Melba poked around the various items of furniture which was for sale, brushing aside the fowls and other livestock which were perched everywhere. She eventually purchased two cauliflowers and went out with one under each arm.

On the day of Melba's funeral, the children from the Ringwood State School were taken down to line the footpath as the cars passed by. The solemn occasion was marred however, by the fact that younger children started to cheer as the hearse came into sight.

The infant mistress was deaf and didn't know what was happening and no explained to the smaller children just what was happening. They had only ever been taken down to the town on festive occasions and many cars piled high with flowers looked to them to be a case for cheering.



Above: Melba's funeral passing through Ringwood in the early 1930s.

THE ARGUS NEWSPAPER

SHORT HISTORY

The Argus began production in 1846 in Melbourne. Originally owned by William Kerr, its main competitor was David Syme's The Age and, later, The Herald where boss Keith Murdoch bought The Argus and closed it in the same year of 1957.

The Argus building, built in 1926 on the corner of LaTrobe and Elizabeth Streets, still stands and is heritage listed by the National Trust and Heritage Victoria.



Above: Argus Office, 76 Collins Street East, Melbourne,

26th March 1867

IN THREE HOURS TO SWITZERLAND

"If we could only get to Switzerland in thirty hours!", the guide book for European travel says. But let it be included among the "things not generally known" that the borders of Switzerland are not more than thirty miles, or three hours' journey from Melbourne.

You only have to travel due-east through musically-named Boroondara and Ringwood, situated like its namesake on the edge of a forest [New Forest, Ringwood, England], until you arrive at the summit of a hill overlooking the beautiful valley of Lilydale, through which flows the Olinda, a permanent mountain stream.

NEWS COVERAGE

In August 2009, the National Library of Australia released the newspaper digitisation program where many Australian newspapers were accessible from the internet, including The Argus. This allows the user - all for free - to search for keywords, such as "Ringwood". A wonderful resource for the researcher as well as for general interest.

There are more than 30,000 entries for "Ringwood", the first appearing in 1858 for the Crown Land sales.

Here are some examples:-

8th March 1858

The periodic sales of Crown Land in the Melbourne district for the present month, commenced this day at Messrs. WM Tennent and Co. auction rooms. The lots to be submitted consist entirely of country land, viz. Nunawading from five to eight miles south of Anderson's Creek [Warrandyte]; Ringwood on the Dandenong Creek between 14 and 17 miles east of Melbourne.

8th March 1866

Hawthorn Court, the following case was heard:-

Twelve woodcutters, who were convicted of cutting and removing timber from Crown Land without a licence, at Nunawading, Ringwood and Scoresby, were each fined 5s and 2s 6d costs.

3rd June 1867

An inquest was held on Saturday, by Mr. Candler district coroner, at Ringwood, on the body of an old man named Louis Robinson, who had been found lying dead in his hut on the 30th ult. Deceased was stated by one witness to have been a squatter, and he had told persons living at Ringwood that he was ninety-two years of age. He had for some time been living at that place, in a hut by himself, and latterly had complained that he sometimes wandered in his mind; he also suffered from rheumatism.

He was seen alive on Tuesday last, until Thursday when he was found by a lad, who entered his hut, lying dead on the floor, partially in the fireplace. The ashes amongst which he was lying were cold when the body was discovered. Dr. Barker having made a post-mortem examination of the body, assigned suffocation as the cause of death, and this, he considered, had been produced by deceased falling in a fainting fit into the fire, by the smoke of which he had been suffocated. The jury gave a verdict in accordance with this opinion.



***Above:** Even in its old location, the Ringwood Clocktower was a very impressive structure. From my study of war memorials around the state, Ringwood is one of the few with a clocktower and, with the few that do exist, are located in the very centre of the town - a source of pride and respect.*

MEMBERSHIP DUES

A last reminder to pay your membership dues for 2010/11. Please send them to the our Treasurer or in-person at the next meeting.

BETTY HAWKINS

Betty, passed away on 30th October. She was a long-term resident of East Ringwood and contributed extensively to many local organisations. Even up to her last years she ran the bookings for the East Ringwood Community Hall and other duties at the Senior Citizens.

I was lucky enough to spend some time interviewing her, which went into the Ringwood East Recollections book. A most generous lady who will be missed sorely. Our condolences to the family.

MAROONDAH FESTIVAL

Thanks to those who attended our stand at the Maroondah Festival on Sunday 7th November. Though disappointing numbers seeking history, we were there out in the community, doing what we can.

NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAM

The program is attached to this newsletter and sounds very interesting. Please support our speakers by attending the meetings, as they go out of their way to entertain and educate you. The good news is that our audience numbers are usually 25-30, which is above or comparable with any historical society in the local area.

SUPPER ROSTER

The roster will be handed around at the November meeting. Please sign up for one meeting to defray the work.

Programme

23 November, 2010

History of Social Poverty with John Murphy of Melbourne University

Supper

23 November, 2010

Graeme Tamme

Current Projects

NORTH RINGWOOD HERITAGE WEEKEND

Still preparing for the November 2011 event, which will probably include the launch of a North Ringwood history book, a North Ringwood Recollections book and a bus tour on the Saturday.

The dates are yet to be decided, to avoid as clash with the Maroondah Festival.

NEWSPAPER SCANNING

Nearly ready to submit our request to the copying company, from the \$2,600 grant we received from the Council. The State Library of Victoria has been helpful, and will lend us the missing issues.

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