



Altona Laverton
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NEWSLETTER

The Y.M.C.A. in early Altona.



The Y.M.C.A. was founded in 1844 in England by George (later Sir George) Williams, pictured left, and 11 friends, they were concerned with the lack of healthy activities for young men in major cities.

Originally known as the Young Mens Christian Association it has now grown world wide and the Y.M.C.A. of today in Victoria is a community association offering programs and services throughout the State.



During 1916 as part of World War One Army training the Y.M.C.A. provided a facility and services for trainees at the Altona Citizen Forces Camp at Altona.

The Spectator and Methodist Chronicle, September 27, 1916 in an article-War Notes and News, had comments by Captain Chaplain Daley, "One of my first duties was to preside at the opening ceremony of the Y.M.C.A. building in the camp. It is a commodious place capable of seating 1500 people. Part is used for a concert hall and the other part is for reading, writing, and games etc.

Mr. A. J. Royce, of our Williamstown Church, who is in charge of the Y.M.C.A. work at Altona gave the men a hearty welcome and assured them he would do all that lay in his power to help them while they were in camp".



The image left from Table Talk Melbourne, September 14, 1916 shows the Governor General congratulating Mr. Archibald Royce, officer in charge on the excellent work of the Y.M.C.A.

The Citizen Forces at Camp in Altona

Image-Weekly Times September 23, 1916 page 27

- 1 17th Regiment marching out of camp 2 Adjutant meeting Lieutenants 3 A general view of the camp
4 A demonstration in the use of the bayonet 5 Checking bayonets 6 Buglers of the Regiment
7 & 8 Bayonet drill 9 Band of the Regiment



The Y.M.C.A. at The Homestead

Our Newsletter Number 20 in 2011 stated:

In her book "Altona - A long View" Hargreen Publishing 1988, the author Susan Priestley states:

In December 1919 the Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA) were given a short lease of the Homestead as an Industrial Hostel, where factory workers could enjoy an inexpensive holiday.

In July 1920, the YMCA was offered the Homestead and grounds for £ 5000 pounds.

For several years previously the Association had cooperated with W.F. Cuming, the head of the Yarraville Fertiliser company, Cuming Smith and Co., to provide a factory lunch canteen.

The YMCA turned the Homestead offer over to Cuming Smith and the firm agreed to its purchase as a Hostel and Holiday camp, for just over £ 5000 pounds.

Three kitchens and a bathroom and lavatories for campers were installed in the main house.

Others could sleep in 20 old cable trams which were brought and installed in the grounds.

The camp was very popular and was usually occupied from November to Easter.

For some years Thomas Meddings who was an employee of Cuming's, together with his wife (pictured) were caretakers of the premises.



By 1932 the tramcars were in a poor state and the Works Manager reported to Cuming, that with some repairs the tramcars would last the coming season but no longer.

(Children are pictured left with tramcars visible in the rear.)

The Cuming Smith company or "Commonwealth Fertilisers" as it had become began to look for an alternative camp site but the initiative faded with W. F. Cuming's death in 1933.

Use of the camp then declined as fewer tramcars were habitable.

In 1935 the Altona Progress Association asked the Council to buy the property for conversion to a Hotel or Boarding House.

Two years later the purchase was concluded.

The grounds became a public park once the tramcars were cleared.

The Y.M.C.A. at The Homestead

The Australasian January 27, 1923 contained the following images of the Y.M.C.A. Industrial camp at the Homestead stating This camp has been constructed for the use of Industrial workers. Here they can spend there vacation with their families at the nominal charge of 3 shillings per week for each family. It is under the supervision of the Y.M.C.A.

Photo images shown:

- 1 Some of the tents 2 Quoits interest the youngsters 3 A game of Badminton in progress
4 The music room at The Homestead (The principals residence)



SCOUT CAMPS IN ALTONA - a century old tradition

Many local people in Altona will be familiar with the Pines Scout Camp on Altona Road. It has a long association with the development of recreational activities in the community and in particular the local scouting movement. But did you know scouting camps have been taking place in Altona for more than 100 years?

In January 1917 the Daylesford Scout Association held what started out as a week long camp at Altona Bay for the First Daylesford Troop. The wet day didn't dampen the spirits of the group as they boarded their train for the first leg of their journey, requiring train changes at Woodend and Spencer Street (now Southern Cross) stations before reaching Altona soon after mid day on Friday 12 January.

They were met at Altona by Walter Henry Howe, manager for the Altona Beach Estate Co and currently residing with his family in the Altona Homestead. Mr Howe provided much assistance in selecting the camp sites, and loaned them his cart to move heavier items to where they were needed. Four marquees were quickly erected on the grounds surrounding the homestead, later rewarded with a refreshing cup of tea provided by Mr Howe's wife, Hannah Maud Howe.

The next day was warm and suitable for swimming much to the delight of the boys and girls attending the camp. The girls followed their dip with games on the beach while the boys and their scoutmaster set off to explore the coast line. Unfamiliar with the area they were almost arrested when they ended up on the restricted government pier at Truganina Explosives Reserve. They had a lot of explaining to do to officials before being allowed to return to camp some two hours late for dinner. The day ended with Mr Howe relating interesting stories about his involvement in the Great War (WWI).

Throughout the camp the scouts enjoyed many activities such as trestle bridge building, signalling, first aid, fishing, practicing for the inevitable concert, games, as well as swimming and shooting competitions with prizes for the winners.

One day the Governor General inspected the Aviation Corps at Point Cook and the scouts were treated to watching the evening's flying demonstration from their camp.

The camp was being enjoyed so much by everyone involved that they all wrote home asking for permission to stay another three days, leaving on the 22nd.

The Thursday was particularly warm and it was the birthday of one of the "camp mothers," so a birthday parade to the local ice cream shop was in order, followed later by a party which included the highlight of another fly over from Point Cook.

The heat wave continued the next day before the campers were treated to one of our dramatic summer evening thunderstorms accompanying the cool change, that sent them all scurrying to secure tents and belongings.

After a church service on Sunday, Mrs Howe was presented with a dainty tea-strainer and Mr Howe with a silver mounted pipe in a case, in appreciation for all the assistance they had provided.

Casualties during the camp were few with a torn dress for one of the girls and a sprained foot for a patrol leader.

The camp was considered so successful that another 10 day camp was planned for January 1918 catering for 39 girls and boys from the Daylesford Scouts. Walter and Hannah Howe were still on hand living in the Altona Homestead and were able to once again provide their valuable assistance.

Bibliography

Daylesford Advocate, Yandoit, Glenlyon and Eganstown Chronicle published Friday 16 Feb 1917 and Tuesday 12 Feb 1918 (page numbers not provided).

(Scout Camps Research by Ann Cassar)

From the Secretary



COVID-19 may have isolated us to our homes, but it has not slowed down the queries via email. Since the pandemic commenced, we have had several research queries on families who lived or worked in Altona. This included undertaking research on the Meddings family that were the caretakers of the Homestead back in the 1920's and early 1930's. We have assisted Hobsons Bay City Council undertake research on local street names in Altona Meadows, Williamstown North, Williamstown and Spotswood. So, look out for some new historical signage to go up soon.

We have also been contacted by family members of the Logan family (Reginald Logan) who was a resident and councillor of the Altona Riding and also Altona Shire. Reg Logan's name is recognised at Logan Reserve and also Logan Avenue in Altona. They have been providing background information and clarifying facts within our research. So, in the very near future two new pages will be provided on our web site. One under Reserves and one under Streets.

We have also undertaken a number of remote presentations to groups including one on the Indigenous people of this area to the local Scout Group which was well received. We also completed a three by 1.5 hour sessions to U3A on the History of Altona which also attracted keen interest.

We have not been idle in the Homestead either with time being spent cleaning each of the rooms and rearranging items to better show case items on display. We have at the same time been cleaning all of the surfaces ready for the date we can reopen the Homestead to the public. It is amazing how much you can get down in a lock down.

Stay safe and hopefully it will not be too long until we can gather and talk of history again.

Thanks

Graeme Reilly

The National Library of Australia has updated its Trove Website



The National Library of Australia updated the format of the Trove website during June 2020, members should visit this site if they are wishing to research subjects of interest, there seems to be more generally available information now from online newspaper and magazine articles.

History

Trove was launched in December 2009, the bright idea of National Library of Australia staff.

It was always seen as a way to bring together collections of wonderful things - in technical terms, an aggregator. Initially, this was a wide range of collaborative library services, including:

- The Australian Bibliographic Network, later Libraries Australia;
- Pandora – the National Library's web archiving service;
- RAAM – the Register of Australian Manuscripts;
- Picture Australia;
- Australian Dancing;
- Music Australia;
- ARROW Discovery Service;
- People Australia; and
- The Australian Newspapers Beta Service.

Trove's first name was the Single Business Discovery Service (catchy, isn't it?). Perhaps due to this name not exactly rolling off the tongue, staff briefly bestowed the nickname Girt. As in, "our home is girt by sea"...

Shortly before the launch in December 2009, the name Trove was suggested by a clever Library staff member. It brought to mind a treasure trove, as well as the French verb *trouver* meaning "to discover", and was immediately popular.

And that is how the story began.

