

Meals on Wheels

Audrey MacFarlane

Before 1970 there had not been any formal recognition of a need for a Meals on Wheels delivery service in Taroona. Meals requirements in the Hobart Metropolitan area had been catered for by the volunteers of the Hobart and Glenorchy Meals on Wheels Groups, both of which operated under some financial strain.

With the promulgation of the Federal Government's Delivered Meals Subsidy Act in 1970, designed to assist in the expansion and maintenance of meals services generally, the Committee of the Hobart Group undertook to consider extending meals deliveries to areas not hitherto covered. In conjunction with the Department of Social Security a survey was therefore conducted, in which Taroona was included, with the aim of estimating present and future requirements. Relevant information was sent out with pension cheques, given to medical practitioners and hospitals, and circulated widely to the elderly in the community. Analysed results encouraged the Committee to plan for the expansion of their meals services to Taroona, so as to be able to start deliveries as soon as a potential recipient was identified.

Following on from this 1970 study Dr. Mary Cheeseman recommended an elderly resident, the late Mr Blyth of Stewart Crescent, as someone in urgent need of delivered meals as he was living alone because his wife had been admitted to the care of the Mary's Grange Nursing Home. He was experiencing difficulty in fending for himself and at the same time keeping in personal touch with his wife by daily visits to the Home. By making arrangements with Mary's Grange for the collection of meals from their kitchen the Hobart Meals on Wheels Group was able to start deliveries in June 1971 using a team of Hobart and local volunteer drivers and helpers five days a week to Mr Blyth, the first of the four earliest recipients in Taroona. He was able to continue accepting these meals until three months before his death in 1980 in his 97th year.

The numbers of meals recipients in Taroona and Kingston grew during 1971 and towards the end of that year Mary's Grange had found

themselves unable to continue the provision of meals for Taroona because of increased internal commitments. To fill this gap it was agreed that Hobart and Taroona volunteers would obtain meals for the round from the Repatriation, Royal and Chest (later named John Edis) Hospital in Hobart. In July 1972 this procedure was reorganised by re-routing the van service which delivered meals from Hobart to Kingston. Meals for Taroona were included in the van driver's quota and were delivered directly to recipients by him on his return journey through Taroona to Hobart. This left the Taroona and Hobart volunteers free for a city round if they so wished.

The next significant event occurred in February 1974, when a Kingborough Meals on Wheels Group was formed, at first with interest only in the Kingston region and with meals obtained locally. This released the Hobart van from its Kingston run and Taroona's needs were supplied by a special van delivery from Hobart. The van driver continued to distribute Taroona's meals personally until a new rostering system came into force at the end of 1975.

As a result of the growing needs in the Hobart area, in November 1975 the Hobart Group Committee asked the Kingborough Group to take over the administration of meals deliveries to Taroona. This was willingly agreed to by the Kingborough Group, so that on the 11th November the Honorary Secretary of the Meals on Wheels Association of Tasmania Incorporated convened a meeting in the St. Luke's Church Hall at which the proposed new arrangements were explained to local residents. An enthusiastic response endorsed action that had been arranged and resulted in the compilation of a full roster of drivers and helpers. A retired gentleman, Mr Bob Stabb (already Honorary Treasurer of the Hobart Group) accepted the position of voluntary roster secretary, to be followed later by Mrs Eileen Robinson for a short period and then Mrs Jane Osborne. The transfer of administration to the Kingborough Group was effected by the end of December. Taroona's meals were still delivered by the Hobart van, but were now off-loaded at the old Shell petrol station. This was operated by Jane and Robin Archer who very kindly allowed their premises to be used as a pick-up centre for the collection of meals by rostered drivers/helpers.

1976 came, and with it plans for a new Senior Citizen's Club to be built in Redwood Road, Kingston. The Honorary Secretary of the Meals on Wheels Association of Tasmania discussed with Mr Bill Pitt (President of the existing Senior Citizen's Club) the possibility of including a Meals on Wheels kitchen in the complex. This was agreed to. Finance for the building, with an adjoining kitchen for Meals on wheels use, was provided from Federal, State and Local Government sources. Contributions from Hobart and certain other member Meals Groups were channelled through the State body of the Meals on Wheels Association to Kingborough to equip the kitchen. The new complex came into operation in August 1978. Financial support for the continued provision of meals from the kitchen was maintained until the Meals operation there became viable as income increased with the growth in the number of recipients.

Frozen meals were allocated from St. Johns Park Hospital and a paid Meals organiser was employed to prepare heated meals, etc. for distribution within the Kingborough area, including Tarooma. At this stage Mrs Julie Meaney-Clarke assumed the voluntary role of coordinator for the Tarooma Meals round. As there was no longer a requirement for the Hobart-Kingston-Tarooma van service, this was withdrawn and Tarooma drivers and helpers now collected their quotas of meals from the Kingborough kitchen. A more stable existence had arrived, ending Tarooma's rather chequered Meals history.

Since the kitchen became operative Mrs Meaney-Clarke has acted most effectively as voluntary organiser and roster secretary for the Tarooma Meals round, ably backed up by Mrs Jane Osborne. High praise is given to the voluntary drivers and helpers of Tarooma who have stood by the Service in all its changes, and lived up to the principle, "the daily visit from a friendly face is as valuable as the meal she carries". Special thanks are due to those drivers who have so willingly accepted additional responsibilities since the Service started in 1971.

At present the Tarooma round extends into Sandy Bay as far as the corner of Churchill Avenue and Sandy Bay Road and meals are delivered five days a week, including public holidays, to an average of eighteen recipients per day.

Medical Services

Alan Wallace

In the late 1940s and early 1950s there was a shortage of medical care in the rapidly growing suburb of Tarooma. Dr. Roberts Pate, who had retired from his government medical work in Swansea, saw some patients from his house, "Thalassa", on the Channel Highway. The government medical officers from Snug, Dr. Blackburn and later Dr. Piscatelli, also visited Tarooma on a regular basis. Patients were seen in primitive surroundings at the kitchen end of the Old Tarooma Hall and they remember an old wartime grey blanket serving as the examination couch. Later the government officer used a room in Mrs Reardon's house at the top of Tarooma Crescent and later still, the vestry of St. Luke's Anglican church. For a time the Country Women's Association arranged a roster of volunteers to act as receptionists in the church 'surgery'.

Thus in mid 1957 there was no resident doctor and in fact the nearest doctor was Paul Clarke on the corner of Margaret Street in Sandy Bay, five miles away.

The advent of the present surgery makes an intriguing story. Drs. Alan and Hilary Wallace had recently emigrated from the U.K. to government service at New Norfolk, in posts which were constantly threatened with closure by the local council. One day in 1957 Dr. Alan Wallace explored Tarooma and called on the chemist, Maurice Rowe, at his shop on the Channel Highway. Maurice Rowe was really in desperate need of a resident doctor for his business to prosper, but advised against any new doctor beginning as he believed that there was insufficient work. Nevertheless, in the shop at that time was Mrs Lucy Smith who, with her husband, then the Director of Social Services in Tasmania, and four daughters, lived in Jenkins Street. She immediately offered to move out of the main bedroom of their home for it to be used as a surgery. Soon after Dr. Hilary Wallace began there, commuting daily from New Norfolk, sometimes with night calls as well!

Business was not brisk, but the opportunity was there so that when a piece of land became available next to the Old Public Hall on the corner of Tarooma Crescent, the doctors snapped it up. A neat, modern surgery was

built in late 1957 and early 1958. As the practice grew the building was enlarged to accommodate a third doctor, Dr. Geoffrey Boughey, who joined the Drs. Wallace in 1964.

In these inflationary days it is always interesting to reflect on costs. In the late 1950s the government reimbursed the doctor 9 shillings for a pensioner consultation and 11 shillings for a domicillary visit. Private patients paid 15 shillings at the surgery and a guinea for a home call. A night visit to a patient's home was still 11 shillings for a pensioner and 1 1/2 guineas for a private patient. Looking after a pregnancy generated 7 guineas, which included perhaps ten antenatal visits, an emergency rush to hospital in the night for delivery, plus all follow-up visits.

Tragedy struck the practice in the 1967 bushfires. The Old Public Hall burned down at the first spark; it had been a fire hazard for years. The sheer heat of its blaze ignited the new part of the surgery next door at one corner, but there was no water and so, long after the main fires had passed, the building was razed while the owners watched on

impotently. Over the ashes a new surgery was built as it stands today.

Later in 1967 Dr. Boughey quit the Tarooma Surgery to pursue his destiny in Sandy Bay and in 1968 Drs. Graham and Jean Evans joined the Wallaces. Two years later the Wallaces themselves left after thirteen years of service to the community. Dr. Mary Cheeseman joined the Drs. Evans for a while and thereafter Dr. Frank Lawrence. In 1984 Dr. Evans himself retired and his place was taken by Dr. Paul Hughes. This chronicle of medical succession relates to the Tarooma Surgery only. For a short time in the early 1980s there was a second surgery at the new Shopping Centre operated by Dr. Morris.

The suburb has increasingly attracted medical care from the expanding services available via doctors in Lower Sandy Bay on the one side, Kingston on the other and often an increasing number of doctors who live in Tarooma, yet whose work is primarily elsewhere.

The Tarooma Surgery, however, stands as a focal point for family medical care in the community.



The Doctor's Surgery in Tarooma Crescent, burning down during the bushfire of the 7th February 1967. Note the Old Public Hall which stood on the corner of Tarooma Crescent and Channel Highway has already been consumed on the left.

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