

## **Ex-Servicemen's Club**

**Jim Hean**

Our club was the brainchild of a group of farsighted ex-servicemen who regularly travelled home together and who, wisely, saw the need for a local venue and organisation to cater for the needs of ex-servicemen and to sponsor community activities generally.

The first meeting, with refreshments, was in the Old Public Hall in March 1947. Mr Harold Suckling was elected the first President.

In those days the Hall was the meeting place for several community organisations, including Church on Sunday. Churchgoers then had to be sturdy to withstand the aroma remaining from the refreshments after an ex-servicemen's meeting.

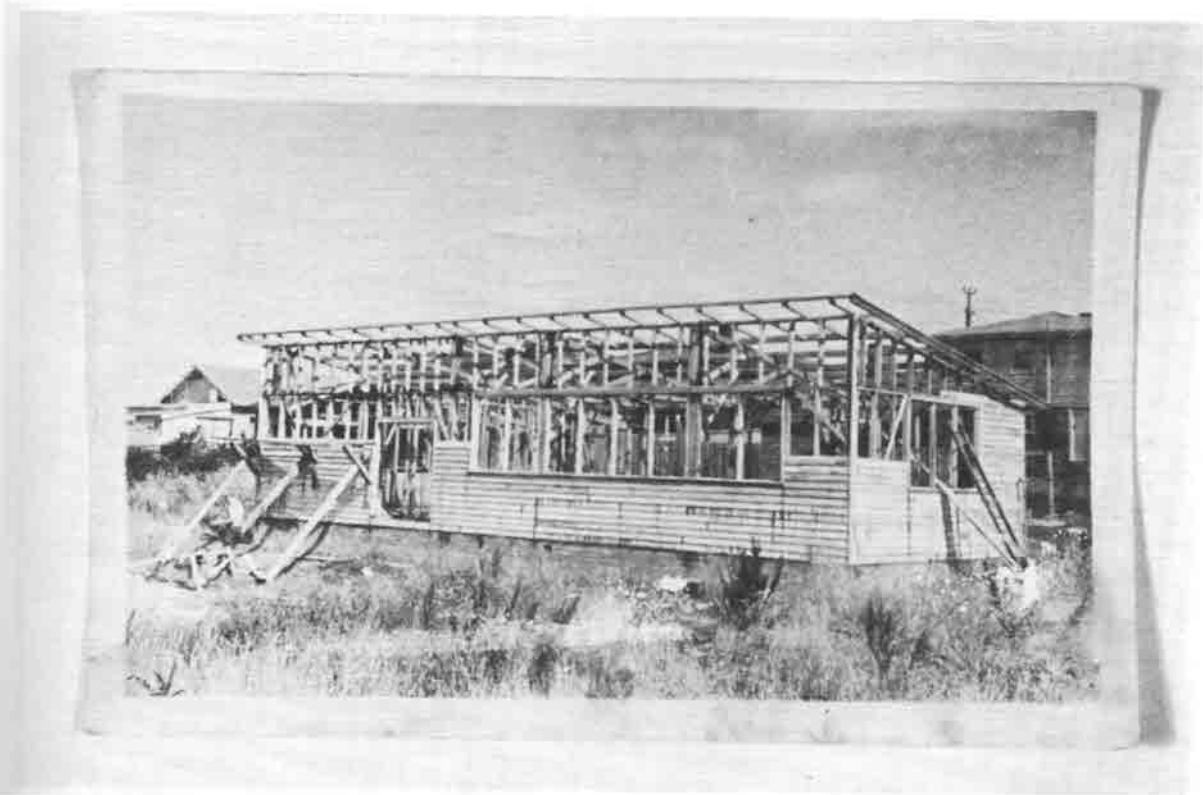
The "left-overs" from those early meetings were usually taken to Norm and Connie Birt's home and consumed over the week-end by the "stayers".

The first "formal" march of the Club members was on the opening night of the Tarooma Hotel, which had been built by Alan Wicks and his partner Nicholls. Members assembled outside the Post Office near Tarooma Crescent and - to the tune of tin whistles - marched down the highway into the bar. Much cheering and frivolity accompanied their entrance!

In 1950 the Hotel lounge, and later the basement, became the normal meeting place for the Club for some years, and many will recall the generosity of the proprietors of those years, Lyn Davy and Graham Mitchell. Graham had been a professional entertainer and often rendered an item or two at these meetings. He was a great comedian.

The Hotel as a meeting place posed some problems. Members had often to be called from the bar to provide a quorum for matters of business!

In 1950, Mrs M.L. Hinsby generously gave a block of land in Jenkins St. on which a



*The Ex-Servicemen's Clubhouse under construction in Jenkins Street, 1954.*

EX-SERVICEMEN'S CLUB.

## *Clubs and Organisations*

Clubhouse could be built. John Goldsmith was the architect and the Clubhouse was built entirely by members. It was officially opened by Mrs Hinsby at a gala function on Saturday, the 15th May 1954.

Since 1950 the Club has provided a Christmas treat for the children in the district. A truck, complete with Father Christmas and helpers, has toured Taronga and Taroona distributing icecream, sweets and balloons. The truck finishes at Mary's Grange, with a distribution to the old people at the Home.

It is a treat which is unique, and of which the Club is very proud. It has been generously supported by the community and business houses in the district.

Many will remember Nobby Gadd, the driver of Jacko Johnson's truck in those early years.

The first Anzac Day dawn service was held in 1957 and has been well attended by ex-servicemen ever since.

1952 saw the publication of a regular monthly news bulletin, but with the passage of time and declining membership the bulletin simply "faded away".

The Club has fostered the formation of a

number of group activities in the district, as well as conducting social functions for its members. Ladies Nights, Car Trails, Monte Carlo Nights, Picture Evenings, have provided a lot of enjoyment for a lot of people.

On the 7th February 1967, much of Taroona was ravaged by the fire which swept Southern Tasmania. Seventeen homes were destroyed or very badly damaged. Fortunately no lives were lost, and Club members were quick in their response for help and assistance in the cleaning up operations which followed.

Over the years, help in adversity has been a feature of the Club's activities, and many have benefited from the helping hands of Club members at times of need.

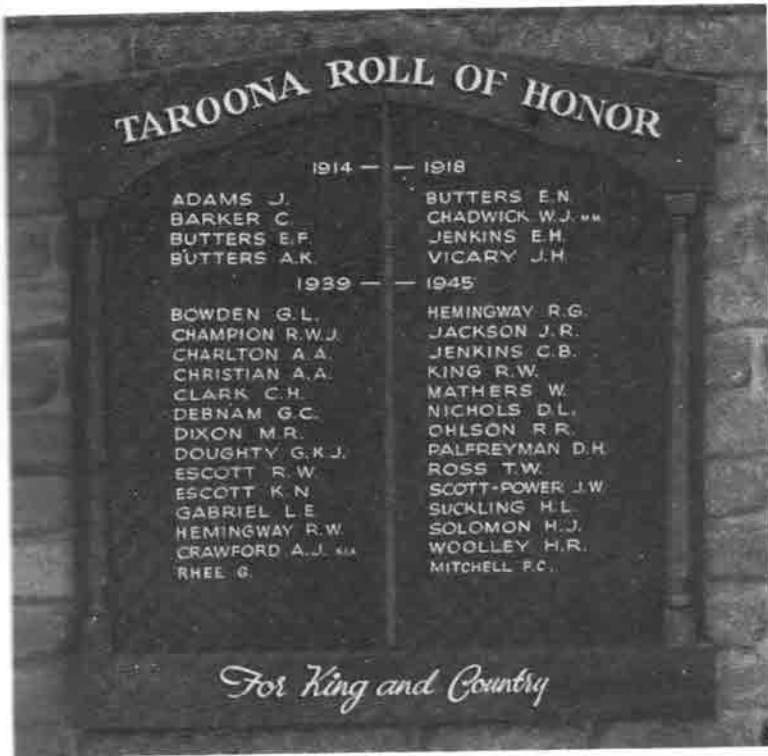
The Club owes its conception and continued existence to the work and interest of its members, particularly those early people whose foresight and enthusiasm established the Club and kept it going during the difficult periods.

No record of the Club would be complete without mention of our Life Members, the late Tom Briggs and the late Marc Ashton. We owe them a debt of gratitude for their service to the Club and to the community.



*The Ex-Servicemen's Clubhouse shortly after completion, 1954.*

PHOTO AMY ACTON.



*This Roll of Honour now hangs in a prominent place in the New Community Hall.*

PHOTO CARL WOOD.

*The First President,  
1947-48.  
H.L. Suckling.*  
EX-SERVICEMEN'S CLUB.



Clubs and Organisations



*Father Christmas on his annual tour, distributing sweets and ice creams to children in Winmarleigh Avenue, 1966.*

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*Presentation of first Life Membership Certificate to Thomas H. Briggs, Esq. D.C.M., I.S.M. by the President R.H.Q. Stabb.*

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