

The Playgroup

Jill McNeice

A meeting was called in Hobart during June 1973 to organise playgroups for Hobart and suburbs. Local residents Sylvia Mountford, Jill McNeice and Kay Kerrison attended this meeting and began making arrangements for the Taroon Playgroup to become established. A call for other interested persons in the local paper resulted in six mothers meeting at the home of Mrs Kerrison in Baringa Road.

Word soon spread and the first playgroup was held on the 3rd July 1973 in the Uniting Church Hall, Taroon Crescent. Those present was Mesdames S. Mountford, M. Tattersall, J. McNeice, P. Smith, K. Kerrison, M. Meehan, R. Mazengarb, A. Edwards, J. Murdoch, J. Flanagan, B. Lawrence and A. Mol.

These twelve enthusiastic mothers and approximately fifteen not so enthusiastic children constituted the first fun morning. Members paid 30 cents per family, to go towards the small fee charged for the hall hire, as well as a cup of tea and a biscuit for the mothers. Each family brought a piece of fruit which was shared, a practice which is still used with great success today.

The group was not financial enough to buy toys and other equipment and it was agreed that bikes and other suitable toys be brought along to share.

This was not a great success and was soon discontinued.

The 30 cents took a few weeks to accumulate and it was not until the end of July that the group was able to buy two jigsaw puzzles, one easel, some blocks and four packets of coloured pencils. By memory, most of the activities used inexpensive items, such as cardboard boxes, paste and, once the recipe was discovered, playdough.

The first committee was:

President and Playgroup Assoc. Rep:
Jill McNeice
Vice President and Group Leader:
Merilyn Moore
Secretary: Kay Kerrison
Assist. Secretary: Pepita Nichols
Treasurer: Marion Tattersall
Purchasing Officer: Robin Hopcroft
Entertainment Officer: Pam Smith

By August 1973 the group had approx-

imately eighteen members and the church hall was far too small for the needs of some twenty five mothers and children. It was then decided to move to the Ex-Servicemen's Hall in Jenkins Street. The hall was ideal, as there was a separate room to store the group's small number of toys. There was also an area outside for the children to play. The children were always supervised as the grounds were unfenced. These grounds were to be of major concern over a number of years.

The numbers continued to increase, with new members coming every week. Mothers were able to meet new friends and the children used to love to fight, kick and annoy each other in between having a really good time enjoying the company of other children and adults. The weekly attendance stayed at an average of twelve mothers and sixteen children.

Excursions have been an important part of the Playgroup's activities. The first trip was a ferry ride on the "Matthew Brady". Another early outing was a train trip from Hobart railway station to the Cadbury station at Claremont. This was a treat that has not been possible to repeat in recent years. Our program has also included picnics to the beach, a trip up Mount Wellington, a visit to a transport museum and many others.

The financial members for

1973-74 numbered 22,
1974-75 numbered 45,
1975-76 numbered 32,
and 1976-77 numbered 42.

Since this time the numbers have not changed a great deal, although the faces have. Many members have come for a very short time and others are still around with their second and third child. The Playgroup used to meet twice weekly on Tuesday morning and on Thursday afternoon. The afternoon sessions were soon discontinued due to low attendance.

The first Christmas party was held on the 18th December 1973 and Mr Keith George had the leading role of Santa. Each parent was required to purchase a present for her child at a cost of not more than \$1. The Playgroup children have looked forward to this event for nearly 15 years.

At a general meeting on the 4th October 1976 it was decided to hold another Playgroup session on Friday mornings. Approaches were

Clubs and Organisations

made to Fr. R. Mitchell at St. Pius X Church, to see if the Playgroup would be able to use the church hall. In early 1977 the Friday Playgroup was established there and is still very active.

For many years correspondence was sent to the Kingborough Council about the state of the grounds around the Jenkins Street Hall. The grass was always too long and often broken bottles were found. It was not very safe for the children to play outside.

On the 1st May 1975 Mrs Cynthia Turnbull, (representing an interim committee), wrote to the Playgroup Association seeking its support for a community centre. Mrs Doris Struwe replied with enthusiasm on behalf of the Playgroup, but it was to take many years to achieve the aim of interested persons in the community.

In May 1978 a letter appeared in the suburban paper of the *Mercury* expressing concern that the children of Taroona were not very well catered for. An elderly citizen wrote that the children had a "hall kindly lent to the elderly citizens by the ex-servicemen but the space is cramped and the toilets deplorable". The secretary at the time, Mrs Eileen Maskrey, wrote to the editor agreeing with the description of the situation, saying that approaches had been made to the Kingborough Council in the hope they could remedy the situation.

A public meeting was held on the 27th August 1979 to discuss the formation of a management committee for a new hall to be built.

Mrs Janet Rapley was our representative on this committee. When the hall was opened on Saturday the 26th January 1980 the mothers were delighted with the building which had provision for storing toys and equipment and ample fenced area in which the children could play.

The Playgroup has supported the Kingborough Council where possible in donating money towards equipment and repairs of the same. In June 1980, \$300 was given to the management committee of the hall, of which \$100 was to go towards playground equipment and \$200 was to "complete the provision of drapes in the hall".

In May 1981 we approached the Hobart Town Lions Club for their financial assistance for some playground equipment. The

Kingborough Council and our group were to share the cost and the Lions Club generously approved a donation to meet the shortfall of funds. The climbing frame in the grounds has been enjoyed by many children in the Municipality, as well as regular Playgroup members.

The Playgroup holds bi-monthly meetings at the home of one of the members. In between the meetings a newsletter is available which, over the years, has been made very informative by several members, especially Pam Adams and Juliet Allingham. A magazine called *Tots Talk* is circulated regularly from the Southern Tasmanian Playgroup Association. This keeps the local groups in touch with ideas and excursions of other playgroups.

Many fund raising activities have been held over the years to buy toys and equipment for the children to use. Wine and cheese evenings, luncheons, morning teas and barbecues have all been good fund raisers. Many people and their families, as well as the local shopkeepers, have been very supportive to us over the years by providing toys for the children and very good prizes for raffles.

The current office bearers are:

President:	Sue Chapman
Vice President:	Elizabeth Hammer
Secretary:	Maryanne Roach
Treasurer:	Chris Curtiss





The First Progress Association

The First Progress Association

From about 1930 to 1940 the Progress Association held an annual sports meeting for children on Hinsby Beach on New Year's Day. The above photo is of the organising committee for 1939-40.

*Back, L to R: George Hebb, Bill Scholes, Jack Martin, Leo McPartlan, Bert Johnson, Charlie Ward, Ray Charlton.
Front, L. to R: Neville Bowden, Jack Hemingway, Dave Bonnitche, Tom Briggs, Dick Hemingway.*

PHOTO BOB BESTER.



Taken on Hinsby Beach in 1938, with boat sheds on the right, and an open-fronted sheltershed which had built-in tables and seats for picnic parties. This was built by the Progress Association which functioned from about 1930-1940 and was used by it to hold its committee meetings.

PHOTO BOB BESTER.



Rotary Youth Camp

Dugald McDougall and Ruth Butler

Have you ever wondered why there are green iron gateposts in the school grounds, on the corner of Karingal Court and the Channel Highway? They once had a square arch over them with the words "Rotary Youth Camp" in black letters on a long yellow board.

The camp was established through the vision of the Hobart Rotary Club:

TAROONA CAMP

The development of the Camp Area at Tarooona was according to a programme initiated this year, when in addition to the laying down of a roadway leading from the Brown's River Road to the selected Camp Site, and the installation of water supply, a section of the planned building erection was almost completed. After the workmen in the employ of Rotarian Roy Tait in very generous fashion and without any thought of remuneration had laid down the framework, etc., the enthusiastic amateur carpenters of the Club got busy, and every Saturday saw a number respond to Committee Chairman Sam Hancox' call for helpers. The experience has already been theirs of seeing the happiness afforded the young people, for the camp, even in its incomplete state, was used by three or four parties during the year, notably the Toc H Organisation for their Summer health camp for underprivileged boys from the country districts.

It is the intention to carry out each year a section of this development work until a fully equipped camp has been established¹.

In the *Mercury* of the 16th February 1940 the opening of the camp on the previous day is recorded:

ROTARY CAMP OPENED

Work Eulogised by Premier

Tribute to the work of the Rotary movement in youth welfare was paid by the Premier (Mr. Cosgrove) last night when he officially opened the camp established by the club at Tarooona.

Several years ago the club decided to secure a camping ground mainly for the benefit of youths unable to take a holiday in healthful surroundings. In 1938 the site at Tarooona was obtained at a cost of £615. As soon as it was secured members of the club began to develop the grounds, and to June 30 last £156 was spent in providing buildings and camp equipment. This year a further £200 is to be spent. The property commands a delightful view of the

harbour, and excellent swimming facilities are provided by the beach on the foreshore boundary. Although a roadway has been built and paths laid down, the natural beauty of the site has not been marred.

A spacious assembly hall has been erected and members of the club have given much of their time and labour in developing the grounds. Already numbers of encampments have been held, the last being that conducted by Toc H, when boys from all parts of Tasmania participated.

One of the first camps held was reported in the *Mercury* on the 18th January 1940:

TAROONA CAMP ACTIVITIES

The boys of the Toc H holiday camp at Tarooona were yesterday visited by Tex Morton, the yodelling vaudeville artist. Mr. Morton spent half an hour entertaining the camp with songs and banjo numbers. To show their appreciation of his visit the boys afforded him three rousing cheers.

Through the courtesy of the Master Warden of the Hobart Marine Board (Mr. T.J. McKinley) the officers and boys of the camp were taken on a river trip on the Toorah in the afternoon. They were transported to and from Tarooona in cars belonging to members of the Rotary Club of Hobart.

Today 24 boys will come to Hobart to receive free dental attention.

In 1943 Rotarian Max Geeves undertook to level a large area at the bottom of the camp, overlooking the beach, and covered it with ashes from the Hobart Gas Company, ready for tent camps. Forty five scouts enjoyed camping out at Christmas time that year.

In 1944 the Electrolytic Zinc Company gave Rotary another 4 acres and negotiations were under way to buy a further 2 acres. Eventually the camp site had 9 acres of heavily timbered land. A military hut was bought for £50 to provide a new dormitory.

There were three buildings about a third of the way down the hill. One was used as sleeping quarters and a recreation hut/kitchen. Further down was the caretaker's cottage, and to the right of the track, which is still in use, were three showers - cubicles with no doors and cold water! We are told that some people preferred the Derwent, or to go dirty.

The camp was popular and used by scouts, guides, Toc H, Y.M.C.A, church groups, Salvation Army units and day picnics.

In 1952 the Hobart Rotary Club reported:

The popularity of the Tarooona Youth Camp has been again shown during the year. the committee handled approximately 1,140 persons at one-day picnics, and 575 who spent periods ranging from 2 days to 4 weeks at the camp.



The entrance to the main building, c 1945.

PHOTO REG ESCOTT.



Scouts wheeling their trek-cart down the hill into the Rotary Youth Camp.

PHOTO PETER CHATTERTON.



Back of the main building which faced the River Derwent, 1950.

PHOTO OLGA REARDON.

A room was added to the caretaker's cottage and children from the West Coast occupied the camp during the royal Visit in 1954.

The Rotarians continued to raise money and worked at maintaining the site and buildings. In 1956 they bought spades, forks, rakes, etc. so that other people could help with working bees. A new septic tank and toilet block was installed and the buildings were painted.

Many people have happy memories of camps and picnics at the Rotary Camp. One group of scouts which used this site was the 1st Battery Point Land Scouts. On a Friday evening, after tea, they would gather at the Parish Room at St. George's Church, Battery Point, load all their equipment onto a trek cart and then tow it in the dark to the Rotary Youth Camp, and return on Sunday afternoon.

By the end of the fifties the camp was popular for day picnics and short camps, but needed many repairs and much cleaning up. Tarroona suburb was developing around it, reducing the privacy and increasing the land value. Many of the organisations which had been using the camp site had built their own camps and bookings were not as heavy. Therefore Hobart Rotary Club sold the land and facilities for £17,750 in 1964 and in February 1967 the bushland and buildings were destroyed by the bushfire. Some concrete from the foundations can still be found in the paddock. For twenty four years thousands of people came and enjoyed a holiday at the Tarroona Rotary Youth Camp.

Reference

Hobart Rotary Club Annual Report, 1939.

Scouting

Michael Saunders

March 1954 saw the formation of the 1st Tarroona Scout Group (Registered number 82) comprising five scouts, Ian and Graeme Ewing, Peter Hunt, Lindsay James and Tony Wilson, led by Mr Keith Ewing as Scoutmaster.

These five boys were members of the 7th Hobart Scout Troop and had friends living in Tarroona who found it difficult to travel to Hobart on Friday evenings, so the formation of a group in Tarroona overcame these difficulties.

Keith Ewing joined the 7th Hobart Scout Troop in 1952 as Assistant Scoutmaster and he trained on Friday nights under their Scoutmaster. The 1st Tarroona Scout Group chose the blue shirt and shorts as used by 7th Hobart but reversed the scarf colours to red with black binding.

In 1971, in line with the general policy recommended by the Scout Association, the uniform changed to its present form of khaki jumper, shirt, shorts and socks; long trousers are now an option to shorts.

Cubs came into existence with the appointment of L. Gangell as Cubmaster in 1955. Soon boys from eight to ten years of age were being taught about scouting and shared the Old Public Hall (q.v.) with the scouts.

The second Scoutmaster Don Hurburgh, from the 1st Hobart YMCA Troop, took over from Keith Ewing in 1955 and using his talents as a builder, designed and built a scout hall in Apex Park where the present building now stands.

At this time the "Manresa Estate" (formerly owned by D.H. Harvey) at Sandy Bay was being subdivided. One of the buildings to be demolished was the old weatherboard coach-house and coachman's quarters. The building was offered free to the 1st Tarroona Scout Group for removal. Over several weekends the scouts organised by Scoutmaster John Tenniswood, with the help of Don Hurburgh's truck, demolished the building and moved the materials to the new scout hall site.

The plan to reconstruct the building proved impractical so some of the material was used in the construction of a new hall whilst the surplus was sold to generate funds. The hall

was completed within six months with considerable drive and help from Charles Spradbury and John Payne. Money-raising was coordinated by Mrs Keith Wilson and was heavily dependent on Bottle collection drives.

Unfortunately the 1967 Bushfires destroyed the scout hall and Don Hurburgh was again asked to help. Don built the present building on the site of the old one and he was joined in the designing by Ray Worsley, the Assistant Scoutmaster. The building was financed from insurance along with Fire Relief money donated by mainland and overseas scouts. The hall was finished early in 1968 and was officially opened by Sir Charles McLean, the Chief Scout of the Commonwealth, twelve months and one day after the first hall was burnt down.

The continuing success of the 1st Taroona Scout Group had been made possible by the work done by the group committee, a body made up of parents and friends of scouting. Through their support and fund-raising efforts money has been raised for the maintenance of the hall, supplying of equipment and various scouting activities.

With the expanding nature of the Group a Senior Scout section (boys fourteen to eighteen years old) was formed in 1967 with Ray

Worsley as the leader. This section later became known as the Venturer Unit and included girls as well as boys.

The Group was very popular with the local boys and flourished during the late 1960s and early 1970s. At one stage there were two cub packs, two scout troops and a senior scout section with a total of about one hundred and twenty boys involved. The success of the Group during this period was mainly due to the enthusiastic efforts of Ron Wisbey who was a Scout Leader from 1964 till 1981 and also had the responsibility of Group Leader from 1970 till 1981. At this time he resigned and accepted the position of Kingborough District Commissioner.

There are many banners and trophies in the scout hall bearing evidence of a vigorous past and showing a positive outlook for the future. Among the achievements are six Queens Scout awards. The first were Kieron Worsley, Robert Twin and Michael Hurburgh in 1969, followed by Chris Wisbey, Michael Woolley and Andrew Baker.

The Taroona Scout Group has in the past and continues to provide an environment where young people adhering to the Scout Law and Promise are able to become more responsible adults.



The Scout Hall taken in 1986, as rebuilt after the 1967 bushfires.

PHOTO ANDREW LORD