

PL O D E S S A Y :

'HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS ON THE WAY',

The Express 11 December 1958

Although the inaugural meeting of the Wonthaggi and District Historical Society was held fifty years ago on Wednesday 20 February 1959 at the Technical School Library, it was at a public meeting over dinner at Taberner's Hotel that the Society was actually formed.

According to a report by Lyn Chambers, "interested citizens authorised T. Rahilly, J. Glover and A. Quilford to call a public meeting in order to form an Historical Society." Consequently, invitations for a dinner at Taberner's on 3rd December was sent out on 21st November; RSVP by 29th November. (The mail must have been quick in those days because all communication would have been by post. Most RSVP letters were written with fountain pens in a beautiful copperplate hand. The invitation itself, however, was typed and probably run off on a gestetner machine.)

One of the guest speakers at the dinner was J. Feeley, Assistant Chief Librarian at the State Library, who advised those who were interested in getting the Society going, to "confine their boundaries of research and begin with the elderly".

At the first meeting in 1959, office bearers were elected. Mr Tom Rahilly was the first president of the Society. His first task was to preside over a discussion about a constitution, the drawing up of the initial aims of the Society and determination of the annual fees. "It was moved by Mr Quilford that 'fees of 10/- per annum and 2/6 for junior student members would be a suitable amount'; seconded by Rev. Reynolds."

A sub-committee was appointed to deal with the constitution and a general discussion concerning sources of enquiry, definition of boundaries resulted in an agreement of what the aims of the society "could be." These were:

1. Local History but not bound in sources of enquiry;
2. Personal histories and local "characters";
3. Old roads;
4. Old pubs;
5. Original settlers and place names;
6. Early parish churches.

It was moved that the next meeting be held on 8th April 1959, but it seems the members of the Society could not find a way to get together again until 30th July of that year. The excuse was that many members of the new Society were so busy with preparations for Wonthaggi's Jubilee Celebrations that they could not easily find the time for another meeting. President Tom Rahilly declared that the chief business of the second meeting was "to discuss the Objects of our society", but before the discussion began, "Mr Chambers moved that 'for the time being we work as a separate association and that later we may apply to the Royal Victorian Historical Society for a charter'. Seconded by Mr Quilford."

The Objects the group decided upon that night were:

1. To awaken an interest in Historical and Geographical beginnings

- of our district;
2. To collect, classify and enquire into historical events;
3. Maintenance of records and relics;
4. Marking & designation of historical places;
5. The dissemination of historical information and such other objects that our society may otherwise decide.

In keeping with these 'Objects' the group agreed that the immediate project for the Society would be "To assist the Jubilee Committee in the preparation of historical data, and that we put on a display of relics and documents."

It was suggested by the President that "each member personally endeavour to collect records and relics."

