

THE STORY OF THE MONBULK RSL



Anzac Day c.1960

Today the Monbulk RSL is a modest building in the centre of town but these clubrooms have a story to tell. The clubrooms represent the hard work of much voluntary labour with which Monbulk has been identified since its days as a "Village Settlement" in 1893.

After the First World War some Monbulk returned men banded together under the title of 'Monbulk Diggers' to organise an annual TB Ball for the returned soldiers and sailors with tuberculosis who were not eligible for war pensions. The Ball, held in the Monbulk Mechanics' Institute, became one of the major events of the social calendar attended by many including Sir George Knox, State member for the hills for many years, and his wife, Lady Knox.

During WWI, the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA) was formed. In 1940 this became the Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmens' Imperial League of Australia (RSSAILA) and is the name appearing on the original Monbulk building. It was not until 1965 that it became the now familiar RSL.

In 1946 the returned servicemen of both World Wars from the Monbulk district decided to form a branch of the RSSAILA locally. The members held their meetings in Muriel Peck Cottage in Moores Road, now known as Wellington Cottage. A sub-branch was formed under President G. E. Anderson, Secretary J. W. Gray Jnr. and Treasurer F. Gannon. Plans were made for the day they would have their own clubrooms. These plans moved a

step closer with the donation of the block of land in the centre of town by Mr and Mrs Frank Severino in memory of their son Frankie Severino who died in an accident when a young man.

During the Second World War a group of women formed the Kookaburra Club under the leadership of Hilda Lane to send parcels to the men overseas. After the war the women continued to work and put their efforts into helping the men raise money for building materials.

Jack Wensley, the local estate agent procured the scarce building supplies through another former soldier, Ned Anderson of Anderson's Timber and Hardware. Builder Jack Cheek supervised the army of volunteers, who included Tom Cavey, Harry Gay, Geoff d'Argaville, Vic Jones, Jimmy Gray, Jack Sykes and many others who devoted any spare time on weekends or evenings to building the first section of the building. The men would sometimes work on the building before a meeting so no time was wasted.

In May 1951 the well-known author, Jeannie Gunn, unveiled the foundation stone for the new Monbulk RSSAILA clubrooms in the presence of President, Dooley O'Donohue and over 200 spectators. In 1953 she returned to the site, to perform the official opening.

Mrs Gunn had been a benefactor and friend to servicemen and their families from the district since the days of WWI. She purchased and donated over

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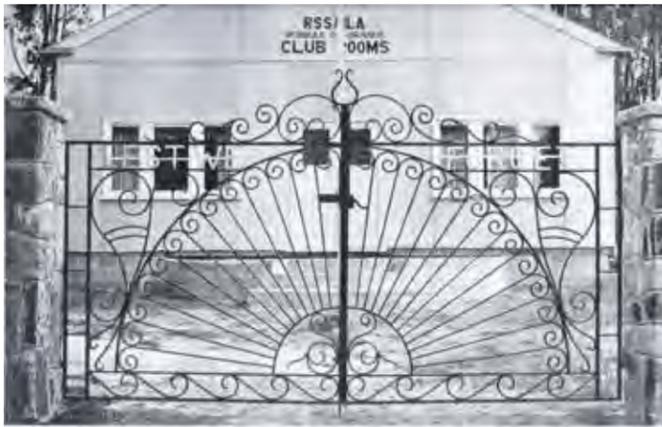
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Jeannie Gunn and Dooley O'Donohue at the Monbulk RSSAILA Foundation Stone 1951

900 books to form a library for the returned men and women. These books are still in what is now the RSL's library.

In December 1955 the Kookaburra Club presented Memorial Entrance Gates for the Monbulk RSSAILA clubrooms in memory of the men who served in the two wars. These gates still stand proudly at the entrance today.



Memorial Entrance Gates presented Kookaburra Club in 1955

Jack Cheek and Nick Panioty worked to build the second stage in 1962. The archway in the main hall indicates the beginning of the second section of the building. The toilet facilities were also added at this time. In 1965 Jack Cheek added a billiard room at the back that was divided from the main hall by folding doors. A bar was then built into one corner of the new section.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT MHS

Monbulk Historical Society is continuing to gathering information for our new project - a book on the origins of the road names in the Monbulk, The Patch, Kallista and Sherbrooke areas.
If you have any photographs, maps or information on your road, please contact us via email explore@monbulkhistoricalsociety.org.au. or call in at the Monbulk Hub on any Wednesday morning.
ALL WELCOME



Anzac Day Monbulk RSSAILA c.1958

The RSL Ladies Auxiliary strongly supported the men's efforts by handling the catering when the hall was hired for wedding receptions, engagement or birthday parties and regular dances. They found their catering to be a good money earner but the small size of the kitchen made the work difficult so in August 1972 Jack Cheek extended the kitchen by six feet and at the same time built the brick facade that is seen from Main Street today.



Anzac Day march near the Monbulk RSSAILA c.1958

In recent years, many members have continued to use their individual skills to make further improvements to the Monbulk RSL. A new billiard room to house their full size billiard table, a members' bar and meeting room and new toilet facilities have all been built on. Another upgrade to the kitchen has also taken place making catering much easier.

The Legacy Ladies and the Monbulk Country Women's Association (CWA) continue to support and raise money for the Monbulk RSL.

Anzac Days are well attended and when the weather is cold and wet a glowing log fire, refreshments and a well stocked bar look most inviting.

Monbulk Historical Society welcomes our new members:
Coral Marr & Bev McAlister.