



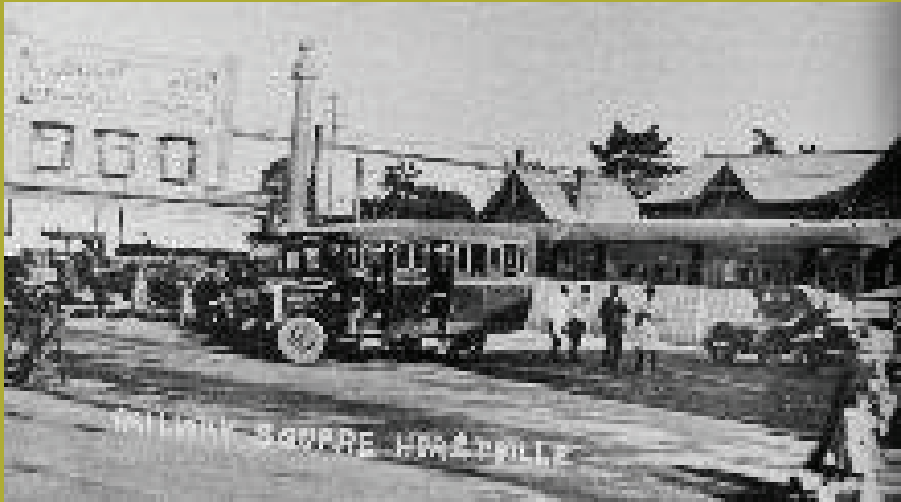
Hurstville RSL Memorial Club Limited

HURSTVILLE
RSL
CLUB

CLUB HISTORY



Memorial Hall 1929



Memorial Square 1935



Hurstville Railway Station



Palace Bistro



Terrazas Restaurant



Sub Clubs 2008

Senior Members

Indoor Bowls

Social Club

St. George TPI Social Club

Affiliated Clubs 2008

Red Cross - Hurstville Branch

Getting Out & About Club

The Hurstville RSL Memorial Club Board of Directors and Management are grateful to Alan Kelso Life Member and current Patron of the Club for his contribution in compiling the Club History.

HURSTVILLE RSL MEMORIAL CLUB

From the Beginning to 1970 Compiled

by *Alan Kelso*

The original Hurstville Memorial Hall opened in 1929 on the site where the Memorial Club now stands. The land was owned by the Railways Department, which had acquired it to build extra rail tracks to Hurstville. The land not needed was given to Kogarah Council on condition that it be leased to a committee which had been formed to raise funds to build a Memorial Hall.

The leading light on this committee was Bill Clegg, a World War I British Army veteran, who migrated to Australia with wife and family soon after the Great War. Bill could be seen around Hurstville at fund-raising stalls selling raffle tickets to raise money for the hall building. He was Sub-branch President for many years well into the 1940's. He lived in Connells Point Road, South Hurstville. When the South Hurstville Sub-branch was formed after World War II, he became involved with this Sub-branch activities, but never lost his ties with Hurstville. His vast knowledge on RSL matters was often sought by Hurstville Sub-branch officers and members.

Other hard-working members of this fund-raising committee were prominent Hurstville businessmen, including Colonel Allen, of Allen Bros. Menswear, who took office as Sub-branch President soon after World War I. He was promoted Major-General in World War II and took a foremost part in Middle East battles and later in the Kokoda Trail campaign.

Another was chemist Mr. Cox, a Gallipoli veteran, who had a shop in Forest Road. A sign in his window read: "If you have a bad head cold and two shillings, I can relieve you of both".

When the hall was built, the Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's League Sub-branch, Hurstville, was given custody of the hall by the Kogarah Council to use it for Sub-branch meetings and events and let it out for community purposes. The rent was one pound per year.

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HALL COMPLETED

The Memorial Hall became the centre of social activities in Hurstville, used for dances, parties and wedding receptions. It was a magnificent building, consisting of a concert hall that seated 200 people, with stage and dressing room, kitchen and toilets. From the foyer, in which stood lovely woodwork listing the names of Hurstville residents who served in the Great War, led doors to a billiard room large enough for two full-sized billiard tables, and a casual room adjoining the concert hall. Around the walls of the concert hall were magnificent murals, more than two metres long and one metre high, depicting battle scenes. These murals were famous throughout the district and people would visit the club just to admire them.

The Hall Committee was offered a liquor licence, but turned the offer down, much to the regret of later members. It is believed the licence then went to Kogarah RSL. A bar and liquor serving facilities were added to the concert hall when the club gained a licence in the early 1950's.

The Sub-branch prospered and soon formed a Women's Auxiliary and later a Younger Set, comprised mainly of the children of members. Many of the Younger Set members were to serve in World War II and become Sub-branch members on their return from service.

During World War II the Memorial Hall was the focus for fund-raising to send comforts to the troops overseas.

LARGE SUB-BRANCH

As troops returned from active service in World War II, activity at the Memorial Hall increased markedly. Events for outside groups were cancelled and the hall used solely for ex-service people and their friends. Liquor licences were restricted to hotels and a few clubs.

Club members had lockers in the hall and, after purchasing liquor at the hotel, stored it in these lockers for consumption in the hall at meetings and other occasions when the hall was open. The original poker machines were installed and these were popular and a source of revenue to the Hall Committee.

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The Bowls Club played regularly at the Diggers Bowls Club. An annual competition was held with the neighbouring RSL Clubs at South Hurstville, Penshurst, Mortdale and the Diggers Bowls Club members. A Board sub-committee, the Sports Council, with representatives of each group chaired by the late Tom Ross, co-ordinated the sports club activities.

SENIOR MEMBERS

To cater for the ageing membership, the Hurstville RSL Senior Members, Wives and Widows Association was formed, a joint venture launched by the Sub-branch President, the late Jack Bradd, and Club Chairman, Alan Kelso. First President of the new association was Jim Keep, who was later succeeded by Herb Hopkins. Up to one hundred members attended each Monday afternoon to take part in the activities.

Regular coach outings were organised to various tourists spots within a day's drive of Hurstville. An annual holiday was planned and up to forty seniors spent a week away at NSW holiday destinations. The highlight of the year was the Christmas party held each December.

CO-ORDINATION OF GROUPS

Once a year all the groups operating within the Club had a meeting with the Board of Directors. Each group was invited to have two representatives at this get-together. All the delegates were asked to raise matters they believed would have the club functioning more efficiently.

By 1970 the Club was in a healthy financial position. The bank had cancelled the guarantee used to obtain the loan for extensions and the debentures had been repaid to members.

Alan Kelso resigned as Chairman of the Board of Directors in 1971 and Les Yates was elected his replacement at the subsequent election at the Annual General Meeting.

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encouraged to dress according to the novelty night and the band played music appropriate to the occasion. Regular Sunday afternoon concerts were held and these were extremely popular.

A Chairman's night was held annually, when invitations were sent to all members, inviting them to book for the night with their family. This was so popular that two nights had to be set aside to cope with the response.

The month of September was set aside for a Spring Festival Month, when members were invited to provide flowers from their garden to decorate the auditorium and special activities were arranged during the month. A Sunday was set aside for a Charity Day, arranged similar to a fete, with members donating cakes and other food items for a sale as well as unwanted goods. This event was well advertised and received great support. Substantial sums of money were raised, which was donated to assist the work at Calvary Hospital.

The RSL Women's Auxiliary played a big part in the organizing of events within the Club, led by the President for many years, Win Hooper. In recognition for her contribution, Mrs. Hooper was made a Life member of the Club.

SPORTS CLUB

All of the sports clubs flourished. These included within the club Darts, Indoor Bowls and Snooker. Each club was playing competition matches against neighbouring clubs. Outside activities were catered for with the Golf Club and Bowls Club. The Golf Club played fortnightly, first at Beverley Park and later Kogarah golf courses. There was a large membership and members were handicapped and divided into A, B and C grades. Competition matches were held with other RSL Clubs. A Picnic Day was held annually, when members and their friends went by bus to play at clubs in the outer suburban area, such as Wallacia and Camden. The Club's annual presentation night was a big social event.

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The Hurstville RSL Sub-branch became one of the largest in NSW. To give activities for these members, clubs were formed for darts, indoor bowls and snooker within the club. For outdoor activities, a golf club was formed and then Kogarah Council gave the Sub-branch land in East Crescent, Hurstville Grove, to build a bowls club, which was named Hurstville Diggers Bowls Club. Later a youth Club was formed to give activities for members' children. The gymnasium at Legacy House was used for physical culture with outdoor sports of netball for girls and cricket for boys.

LIQUOR LICENCE

A Royal Committee was set up in the early 1950's to inquire into liquor trading in NSW. One of its recommendations was that clubs be given licences to trade on much the same basis as hotels. A benefit for the clubs was that although hotel trading was from 10:00am to 6:00pm from Monday to Saturday, clubs had unlimited hours of trading. The one limitation on clubs was that outside hotel trading hours only steward service was permitted and the bar had to be screened shut.

Club membership was restricted by law to Hurstville RSL Sub-branch members, who could invite guests to the club. The guests could remain in the club only as long as the member was in the club. When the member left, guests must leave with them. Later the law was relaxed to allow the club to admit associate members, but the number of associates could not exceed the number of full members. Women were admitted as Associate members in the late 1950's, ending the all-male dominance.

The State Government legislated that all licenced clubs must either be registered under the Companies Act or the Co-operative Act. Hurstville chose to become a company, with a Board of Directors, Chairman, Vice Chairman and Treasurer and four Directors. A Secretary Manager was appointed to control the running of the club.

Chairman of Directors was Tom Martin. Sub-branch Secretary, Jack Dowsett had been organizing the activities of the Memorial Hall, but through ill health he declined the Club Manager position. Frank Long was appointed Secretary Manager.

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NEW BUILDING

The Board decided to build a new building alongside the existing hall, but completely separate from the Memorial Hall, with its own entrance. It was given the name "EDNOMRO", which is the reverse spelling of Ormonde. The new buildings is mostly unchanged from the present club auditorium. The Board's object was to restrict licenced activities to the Memorial Hall and rent out the new building for outside social functions. At the end of the new building was a self-contained flat, to be used as a residence by the Secretary Manager. The club offices and board room now occupy the area of the original flat.

The new building was unlicenced, with the object that the licenced club would supply liquor for functions held in the new building.

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

Finance to build the new addition was borrowed at a high rate of interest. Members were invited to lend money and so-called debentures were issued at a generous interest rate. Quite a few members took up the offer.

However, function lettings were few and it became obvious to members that the club was running into financial difficulties. When worried members raised these matters with the Board they were brushed off as trouble-makers. The Board believed the Sub-branch leaders were behind this discontent and refused the club premises for Sub-branch meetings. Several meetings were held in rooms at Hurstville Civic Centre.

LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

Finally, a petition was passed around calling for the present Board of Directors to be dismissed and an election be called to appoint a new Board. Forty-two members signed this petition, which was the number necessary under the constitution to force the Board to act on the petition.

The Board held its own meeting and voted to strip all forty-two members of membership rights, including access to the club.

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LINKING TWO BUILDINGS

The next objective was to connect the two buildings and plans were prepared for this connection. When an approach to the Rural Bank for finance to build the work was refused the club transferred accounts to the Commonwealth Bank. This bank agreed to make a loan, provided a number of members would guarantee the loan. The guarantors were signed up and work proceeded.

The upstairs area of the club then remained much the same until the latest alterations. The foyer was enlarged and the present stairs inserted.

Downstairs the foyer built for access to the new building was turned into a small dining area and named The Hideaway. The stairway was retained for access to the auditorium until removed in later alterations. An important event in The Hideaway was a welcome home dinner given to celebrate the return of men who had been serving in Vietnam. Some twelve men were traced who had enlisted from Hurstville and they and their partners were invited to an evening at the Club.

Secretary Manager, Mr. Fitzsimmons resigned after only a short time in the position and Mr. Ron Sansom was appointed Secretary Manager. He had held this position with Kogarah RSL Club and he brought with him several senior workers from the Kogarah Club. One of these, Arthur Benjamin, subsequently succeeded Mr. Sansom as Secretary Manager on Mr. Sansom's retirement.

AUDITORIUM POPULAR

The auditorium was crowded on Saturday nights with bands providing dance music and artists staging floor shows. Some artists who are now big stars were booked when they were on their way up. These included Kamahl and Helen Reddy, Sandy Scott, Col Joye and Jimmy Little.

A sub-committee of the Board, together with other interested persons, was set up, named the Social Committee, and chaired by the late George Martin. Novelty nights were arranged, including a Hawaiian night and, when the Beatles were touring Australia, a Beatles night. The Club patrons were

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BANK BALANCE NIL

At the first meeting of the new Board it was discovered there was no money in the bank. The liquor licence fee was due and the brewery was demanding cash before a delivery would be made.

The Club bank account was with the Rural Bank which was owned by the NSW Government and had its branch where Vinnies Op Shop now trades. The Club Chairman had to go begging to the Bank Manager, asking for credit so that it could keep trading. An advance was agreed upon on condition that six members would go guarantee for the loan. The Club Directors willingly agreed to guarantee the loan.

The loan allowed the Club to pay outstanding bills and trading was able to continue. The high interest on the money borrowed by the previous Board was a drag on finances and there was little between income and expenditure.

Some financial relief came for the Club when the Diggers Bowls Club decided it wanted to cut ties with the Memorial Club. It repaid the advance that the Memorial Club had made to form the club.

AUDITORIUM LICENCED

The next priority was to apply for a licence for the new building so that it could be brought into trading. This was granted and a bar with liquor storage and serving facilities was set up where former Sub-branch office and storeroom were situated.

Another blow came to the new Board when a day's takings was stolen in an overnight raid. A staff member was believed responsible, but no arrest was made.

The first function to be held in the new building was a ball, complete with debutants. Chief organiser for this ball was the late Joan Beattie and two of her daughters made their debut at the ball. The then Mayor of Kogarah, Syd Oakie, was invited to receive the debutants, presented by the matron of honour, Eileen Kelso.

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The leaders of the group decided to fight this all the way. Banned from entering the club, they met in the bar of what was then named the White Horse Hotel on most afternoons to plan tactics. The advice of Bill Clegg was sought and he took the matter to State Branch of the RSL.

The RSL State Branch sought legal advice and a court case was lodged. After obtaining an urgent hearing, the court ruled that the expulsions were illegal because the members had not been given the opportunity to appear before the Board and lodge objections. The court ruled that the members be reinstated as club members.

As the Board had failed to act on the petition, the leaders of the petitioners followed the constitution, which allowed them to call a meeting of members and put forward the motion to dismiss the Board of Directors.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Letters to members were prepared and ready to post when the Board of Directors notified members that the Annual General Meeting and election of a Board of Directors would be held, advising the date, and calling for nominations for Directors.

All of the Directors nominated, together with an equal number who were opposed to the actions of the Board.

In the election that followed, all of the sitting Board members were defeated and a new team elected, headed by Alan Kelso as Chairman, Sub-branch President Jack Bradd as Vice Chairman and Eric Young as Treasurer.

Secretary Manager Frank Long resigned. The Board advertised the position and from the applicants appointed Richard Fitzsimmons as Secretary Manager.



Ormonde Parade 1930's



Forest Road 1930's



Memorial Square



Hurstville Railway Station



Forest Road 1930's