

Star of Northcote Centenary Celebrations

May 23rd – June 5th, 1976

TENT OFFICERS

C.R.: Bro. L. R. Reid

D.R.: Sis. V. Groves

Secretary: Bro. L. R. Reid

M.S.: Bro. I. Marshall

Levite: Sis. B. Groves

I.P.C.R.: Sis. L. Groves

Treasurer: Sis. S. Donnison

W..S: Sis. V. Blackmore

Guardian: Bro. D. Groves

Auditors: Bro. T. McWilliams, Bro. L. Brigham

Trustees: Bro. K. Bottomley, Bro. G. Turner, Bro. J. McKay

The Northcote Tent commenced its centenary celebrations on Sunday, 23rd May, 1976, with a P.S.A. in the Northcote Methodist Church. This church, itself in excess of 100 years (being built in 1870), has strong ties with the Northcote Tent. The tent was formed in the church school and held its early meetings there.

There were in attendance at the P.S.A. some 150 Rechabites and friends, including, not only members of the Northcote Tent, but many District Officers and Past District Chief Rulers.

The entertainment was provided by the Sunshine Choral Society who delightfully rendered during the afternoon a varied program of song, music and humour.

During a break in the musical program Bro. Fred Jones, D.C.R., addressed those present. He centred his address around the need for the Order and the Christian Churches to realign themselves as fellow travellers along the path of life, making certain that they indeed do travel very closely together; that they should co-operate and encourage each other to promote their principles and ideals, thus making our world a better place for all to live in.

The second function of the four-part celebrations was a United Tent meeting held on Thursday 27th May in the Rechabite Hall in Westbourne Grove.

In excess of 120 were in attendance.

The C.R., Bro. R. Reid, opened the meeting and after the singing of the opening ode, welcomed the District Officers and visiting members, calling on the following to fill the chairs for the evening.

Chief Ruler: Bro. F. Jones, D.C.R.

Deputy Ruler: Bro. R. Warwick, D.D.R.

Past Chief Ruler: Bro. V. Harkness, I.P.D.C.R.

Secretary: Bro. K. Bottomley, P.D.C.R., D.D.

Assistant Secretary: Bro. G. Wallace, D.S.J.

Treasurer: Bro. J. Rintoul, D.S.

Money Steward: Bro. H. Pratt, P.D.C.R., D.D.

Writing Steward: Bro. L. Peacock, P.D.C.R., D.D.

Levite: Bro. A. Dyer, P.D.C.R., D.D.

Guardian: Bro. G. Sedgman, P.D.C.R.

Bro. F. Jones then proceeded to conduct the remainder of the business.

Bro. G. Wallace read the minutes of the previous meeting and Bro. K. Bottomley read the minutes of the first meeting held on 30th May, 1876. The 100 year gap provided some most interesting comparisons of the two lifestyles; none more interesting than the financial payments made in 1876.

Under Question One the following were initiated into the tent: Bro. Graham Bush, Sis. Anne Bush

and Sis. Alanah Bryden. Bro. R. Warwick, D.D.R. (himself a former C.R. of the Northcote Tent), welcomed the new members to both the Tent and the order.

The rest of the business was then conducted in the usual manner. A letter of congratulations was received from the Ancient Order of Foresters.

Bro. C. Tabart, P.D.C.R., responded to the welcome given earlier in the evening to visitors; he congratulated the tent and thanked them for the warmth of their hospitality.

Bro. Hall on behalf of the Surrey Hills Tent then proceeded with a presentation to Northcote of five pieces of Rechabite Furniture, to which Bro. Reid, C.R., suitably responded.

This was followed by an address by Bro. F. Jones, D.C.R., who emphasised the social and friendship side of our Order. Bro. Jones suggested that tents should look closely at encouraging those eligible to join our Order as honorary members for we have a lot to offer them and they us. He pointed out that Northcote had done just this and had reaped the benefit of its efforts.

Standing orders were then suspended and Bro. K. Bottomley read to the meeting a history of the tent as had been prepared by the late Bro. A. Fillingham on 28th August, 1969. Prior to the reading of the paper, Bro. Hugh Angus, a long time friend of Bro. Fillingham was welcomed. (Excerpts of this historical paper have been included in the history of the tent, printed on the centre spread of this issue).

Prior to the closing, Bro. J. Rintoul, D.S., thanked the Northcote Tent for their invitation to the District Officers.

The meeting was then closed and members chatted over supper.

On Saturday evening May 29th the Centenary Dinner was held in the Northcote Town Hall.

Amongst those present were the Mayor of Northcote, His Worship Mr. H. L. Griffiths; the Town Clerk, Bro. J. W. Hill; District Officers; District Trustees; Bro. H. Angus, Bro. A. Drakeford, Bro. R. Reid (three of six remaining members of Northcote's first 1,000 members); Northcote members; Past District Chief Rulers and members of other Friendly Societies — an impressive gathering of some 280 people in this stately and dignified Town Hall. The District Officers themselves wore full regalia which included a large royal blue I.O.R. sash, plus the normal collar of office.

A delightful three course meal was served, and entertainment by Bro. Alan Rowe, singer, comedian continued on page 170

STAR OF NORTHCOTE 217

100 YEARS OF HISTORY

During the year 1969, the late Bro. A. Fillingham, P.D.C.R., and Bro. Ross Reid, P.D.C.R. (then D.D.R.), two of Northcote's long-standing members got together and endeavoured to piece together some of the vast history of the Northcote Tent.

That which follows (for the most part) is a combination of their work and other pieces of information that have been gleaned from various sources.

The Star of Northcote Tent 217 was officially opened on 30th May, 1876. The District Treasurer, Bro. William Robertson, District Secretary, Bro. William Bell and Bro. S. P. Carney were in attendance. Twelve members were initiated and the officers elected were: C.R., Bro. W. H. Dennis, D.R., Bro. J. Hislop, Secretary, Bro. J. Johnson, Treasurer, Bro. J. Tony, M.S., Bro. W. Murray, W.S., Bro. F. Walker, Levite, Bro. J. Malloy, Guard, Bro. G. South, Trustees, Bros. W. H. Dennis, J. Hislop and W. Murray.

Bro. W. Murray was the principal founder, for it was through his efforts that the Tent was started.

Not a lot is known about those very early days. In fact it is the early 1900's before we are first able to learn something of the conditions of the district and the operations of the Tent.

The main part of High Street in those days, the business section, ran from the Town Hall, north to Separation Street. There were, however, vacant blocks on both sides. The picture theatre site, at the corner of Bastings Street, and the State Savings Bank site at Mitchell Street were vacant lots. The corner of Hawthorn Road and High Street was a coach builders business. R. Cramm's blacksmith and horse-shoeing forge was nearly opposite the Methodist Church (then known as the Wesleyan Church) and the Methodist Sunday School opposite the church, was next door. Further north from Separation Street, there were many vacant blocks and still further north there was the McLeans Tannery and on north wind days there was no doubting that the tannery was up there. Practically all the land west of St. George's Road was vacant paddock, while to the north-east, beyond Andrew Street, was grazing paddock. Gibson's Dairy was at the end of that street and further north-east was Chinaman's market garden.

The tram which ran from Clifton Hill to Preston was closed down for some years, and when re-started, they ran the 'dummies' only. The fare from Clifton Hill to Separation Street was one penny and Separation Street to Preston was one penny. The trams which ran from Clifton Hill to Spencer Street (the trams did not run right through in those days) was a one penny section to Johnston Street and a threepenny fare right through. Concession tickets, five for a shilling could be bought also. A two-horse cab ran from the Town Hall to Johnston Street.

The municipal buildings had been erected, but not the main hall, and where that now stands was

an old wooden building originally housing the fire brigade. The picture theatre was built before the town hall and the Mayor, Harold Bastings, at one time a member of the Tent, opened it with the Mayor's Ball prior to it being used for pictures.

The railway to the city went via North Fitzroy and Royal Park. The railway from Royal Park to Heidelberg did not connect with the city, except through North Fitzroy.

Wages were about thirty-five shillings a week; starting wage for a boy was two shillings and sixpence a week.

The Catholic Church was in Arthurton Road. The Salvation Army was in a wooden hall at the back of where the Masonic Hall now stands, the Post Office and Savings Bank at the Town Hall. The Wesleyan (Methodist) Church was in High Street, and the Primitive Methodist Church, which later amalgamated, was in Mitchell Street. This was eventually taken over by the Salvation Army. There was only one Church of England — "All Saints" — at the foot of Ruckers Hill. The Baptist Church had not been built. The library which is next to the Town Hall was a gift of American millionaire, Andrew Carnegie. The State School was in Helen Street, and the Prince of Wales School only went to the fourth class. Sewerage was just coming to Northcote. Most of the street lighting was gaslight in the main streets, and in the side streets, kerosene-light. All had to be lit individually.

There were six hotels, and such was the pressure that the churches and the Rechabites were able to apply, that at the first local option poll in 1906, the reduction was carried and the number was reduced to five. The Bridge Hotel at the foot of Ruckers Hill, just before you cross the creek, was de-licensed.

Football was played on the ground next to the Croxton Park Hotel in the Victorian Junior Football Association, and in order to have play at the park in Westgarth Street the Rechabites bought a large number of season tickets. This gave some voting power; however, the win was temporary in the short term because the hotel started another club, the Rose of Northcote. This in due course failed and football is still played at the Westgarth Street Park.

The Darebin Bridge had not been built and the only way to get to Ivanhoe was by Heidelberg Road or Bell Street.

Now, in conditions similar to those that have been put and which could not have been any better, the Tent was started in 1876 in the Wesleyan School. With wages at their low level, the contribution of one shilling per week for one pound a week sick pay, and doctor included, was very attractive.

Prominent early members were all men who took a very deep interest in the affairs of the town and the community. Thirteen of its members have been mayors, and many have been councillors of the city; the first Chief Ruler was afterwards Mayor of the city. Three members of Parliament have been amongst the members, Bro. J. G. Membrey, Bro. S. Dennis and Bro. A. Bird.

The strength of the Tent has always been that, since its formation, it has been free from any division of political or religious opinion. Leading members have been of all political parties and of all denominations.

The Tent has had many outstanding personalities. The first Chief Ruler was Bro. W. H. Dennis, who was the father of Bros. Sam and Bill Dennis who were stalwarts of the Tent. Other Chief Rulers that are worthy of mention down over the years are Bro. S. Dennis 1893, and Bro. B. Johnson, a year later. Bro. T. F. Harris in 1898. In 1907, Bro. Theo Hanson was the Chief Ruler; his father kept an ironmonger's shop next to the Methodist Church. Further down the years we come to one of the great men of the Tent, Bro. W. E. Findlay (1910), followed by Bro. Howard Morris (1910), then to the group Bros. Oscar Nuemann (1911), Arthur Fillingham (1911) and Hugh Angus (1912), then into the World War I period and to the present Secretary, Bro. Ross Reid (1920). Another very notable name is Bro. Billy Walker (1924), who was M.C. at all socials. Bro. George McWilliams (1925) was the Social Secretary and afterwards joined the ministry. Bro. Alf Reid was C.R. 1925/26 and Bro. W. J. Dennis was in the chair for the fifty year celebrations.

The Tent has supplied quite a number of District Officers. Bro. J. G. Membrey, in 1912, presided over the Annual Meeting at Hamilton. Bro. S. Dennis in 1922 at Melbourne and Bro. W. E. Findlay (who was the Secretary of the Tent) at Hamilton in 1940. Bro. A. Fillingham was D.C.R. at the wartime meeting in Melbourne in 1943 and also served as D.S.J.T. in 1945/6/7. Bro. Ken Bottomley was D.C.R. in 1959. He had the unique experience of presiding at two Annual Meetings, at Marysville in 1958 and at Cowes in 1959. The reason he presided there was that the D.C.R. at that time was not able to attend the meeting. The Centenary year of Rechabitism in Victoria was 1960/61 and the Northcote Tent was privileged not only to host this great occasion, but to have the honour of one of its most distinguished members as the D.C.R. for that year — Bro. Arthur Fillingham. Bro. Fillingham was only the second-ever member to have the distinction of holding the office of D.C.R. twice. And more recently in 1970, the present secretary Bro. Ross Reid was D.C.R.

Other Office Bearers whose long and loyal services over the years need to be recorded at this time:

- Bro. J. Newnham — Secretary — 18 years
- Bro. W. Findlay — Secretary — 24 years
- Bro. L. R. Reid — Secretary — 26 years
- Bro. O. Nuemann — Treasurer — 18 years
- Bro. J. Woodgate — Treasurer — 11 years
- Bro. J. Woodgate — Auditor — 20 years
- Bro. T. McWilliams — Auditor — 40 years

Trustees with long service were Bros. J. G. Membrey, S. Dennis, H. Morris, A. Fillingham and still serving Bro. K. Bottomley.

The Rechabite hall was built in 1901. The land was bought from the Contingent Fund in 1900. The hall cost £300, with £30 extra for the unsewered toilets at the bottom of the yard. A levy on all members of sixpence per quarter was called, and the rent was paid by the Tent at its meetings until the debt to the Contingent Fund was paid. The hall was let immediately after its building to the Education Department for a classroom. A shed was built out where the kitchen is now for storing the desks, which had to be taken out every night before the hall could be used for meetings. The Church of Christ held services in the hall until they built a church. Additions were made in the middle 1920's to the ladies and gents retiring rooms and kitchen. This was financed from the Contingent Fund.

The Junior Tent at one period was divided into two sections — under thirteen and over thirteen — on account of the great number of boys in membership. About this particular time too, a ladies tent (which was amalgamated in 1955), was formed. Later on they launched out into Junior Tents and had three girls tents, the Croxton, the Thornbury and the W. E. Findlay. Eventually five boys tents operated. At Northcote, Croxton, Thornbury, Dennis and the John Vale.

Mention has been made of the Ladies Tent and its amalgamation. The Clifton Hill Tent was also amalgamated with Northcote in 1972.

In earlier years there were two sub-tents, one the Prince of Wales, which was formed by Bro. J. Newnham. The other was formed when the Closer Settlement Board opened up the Penders Grove Estate for settlement. Neither functioned for very long and eventually were transferred to the Parent Tent.

The Tent has been active in many aspects of the social side of the Order, and has many personalities connected with it in this area.

Bro. Charlie Lacey, in the very early days, ran a book-keeping class. Also run was a gymnasium, with parallel bars, horizontal bars and all the rest of the paraphernalia and, in the pre-World War I days, a very good senior cricket team of which Bro. Hugh Angus was the Secretary. Bro. A. Fillingham was captain and skippered the team to its first premiership. In that period, before World War I, the start was made of the bowls, quoits and shooting teams. Quoits and shooting have dropped out today, but the bowls has been carried on. Bros. H. Angus and A. Fillingham were also members of the quoit team, which in five years lost only twice. They were three times premiers and twice runners up. In the very early days Temperance meetings were held in the hall every Saturday night. The principal organisers were Bro. Charlie Mason and Bro. Jack Newnham and another gentleman by the name of Fuller, who was not connected with the Tent, but who was regular in attendance.

A social committee functioned for seventeen years. It was a social committee with a peculiar constitution — it did not have a Chairman. It met in members homes; whoever was host for the night, was the Chairman for the night, and some of the big events that were arranged became outstanding successes. An Anniversary social was run for many years in the small Town Hall and then in the Masonic Hall. Complimentary socials were given in the large Town Hall when Bro. Bill Findlay was elected as Mayor, and when he was D.C.R., and later on, of course, complimentary Socials were given to Bros. Fillingham and Bottomley. Perhaps a highlight of all the events was the One Thousand Social held in the Town Hall when the tent became the largest in the world with one thousand members. Other activities performed during the year were a Physical Culture Class which was very successful; this was later succeeded by a wrestling class run by Bro. Fillingham.

The Jubilee of the Star of Northcote Tent is worth noting at this point. The first Jubilee meeting was on Saturday 29th May when Bro. W. Murray then in his 84th year was honoured by members. It is recorded that at that time the tent had 530 benefit and 68 honorary members — exclusively male. Sunday May 30th saw a fine array of Rechabites in attendance to listen to the Rev. W. H. Haltham's address. Monday 31st was children's night. Bro. A. E. McMicken, D.D., presided over the evening and addressed the children. Tuesday June 1st was Ladies Day when the Pride of Northcote Women's Tent held an At Home in the small Town Hall during the afternoon. The Mayoress of Northcote Mrs. J. Sutch presided — Mrs. Beresford Jones of the W.C.T.U. was the chief speaker.

The Jubilee Banquet on June 2nd taxed the Town Hall accommodation to its limits to provide seating for all the guests. Those able to maintain this hectic social pace also attended the United Tent Meeting on the Thursday evening. Bro. J. H. Terrill, D.C.R., unveiled the respect board in the Rechabite Hall, then all adjourned to the Town Hall where the meeting was held. Twelve candidates were initiated. Bro. Hon. S. Mauger, D.T., gave the address. On Saturday June 5th the celebrations concluded with a grand concert by leading artists in the Town Hall. Bro. G. McWilliams was commended for his fine organisation of the celebrations.

Northcote has a long and distinguished history as an active Rechabite Tent. It has had over the years many distinguished and dynamic personalities amongst its members. Its membership list is unsurpassed in the Order in Victoria, there being 870 at the time of its centenary. Bros. J. Cornish, 96, R. Moore, 90, H. Angus, 85, A. Drakeford, 85, E. Eaton, 85 and R. Reid, 83, were amongst the first 1,000 members initiated into the tent and are still alive to celebrate its centenary.

To these members and to the Northcote Tent and its years of service to the Temperance cause, all other Rechabites pay their tribute.

and impressionist interspersed the toasts in the latter half of the evening.

Bro. J. Hill, Town Clerk, in proposing the toast to the I.O.R. referred to biblical origins of the Order and to its long history of service to the community and its members. Bro. F. Jones, D.C.R., thanked the Town Clerk and commented on the similar ties between the I.O.R. and the Northcote Council in that both are there to serve the community.

Bro. T. McWilliams proposed the toast to the City of Northcote and spoke of the work of the council and the many members of the Tent that have served on the council or have been employed by same. His Worship the Mayor, Mr. L. H. Griffiths, in response thanked Bro. McWilliams pointing out that council was working in the present and continually looking to the future for its citizens.

The main toast for the evening — that to the Star of Northcote Tent 217 — was proposed by Bro. A. Hore, P.D.T. Bro. Hore made three major points in his proposal:

1. The sound management of the tent over its 100 years both of the benefit administration and the social administration. He particularly commended the work of the present Secretary and C.R. Bro. R. Reid.

2. The achievements of the Tent over its 100 years. In particular amongst many others the fact that it has the largest membership of any tent anywhere in the world.

3. His best wishes for the next 100 years that they may continue to be as successful and more so than the past 100 years.

In reply Bro. R. Reid, C.R., thanked Bro. Hore for his words both to the tent and himself. Bro. Reid paid tribute to the six members still living, who were amongst the first 1,000 initiated, he also paid tribute to those over the years who had served the tent in office for long periods. Bro. Reid also thanked the members of his tent for bestowing on him the honour of being their Centenary Chief Ruler.

The evening closed with the singing of Auld Lang Syne.

The fourth and final celebration evening, the Centenary Ball, was held on Saturday 5th June and was again held in the Northcote Town Hall.

Attendance was, as had been throughout the celebrations, excellent. Two hundred people spent the evening dancing to the music provided. Approximately twenty answered the tents invitation to dress in period costume. Bro. Bill Barnes from the Hawthorn Tent won the first prize for men and Sis. Julie Sutherland, the first prize for ladies.

The highlight of the evening was the presentation of the gold I.O.R. tie bar made to Bro. Ross Reid, C.R. Bro. Ken Bottomley, D.D., in making the presentation pointed out that the tie bar was generally only presented to tent secretaries on retirement. The District Officers however, felt that although Bro. Reid had not retired, his service of twenty-six years as Secretary of the Tent should be recognised. Bro. Bottomley also congratulated Bro. Reid on the excellent work he personally and his officers had performed in the organisation of the centenary celebrations. The presentation was greeted with a standing ovation from all present.