

Official Opening of the Ringwood Cool Stores on 17th March, 1911

In the early years of pioneering development, it was found that the land was especially adapted for the cultivation of fruits, flowers and vegetables, and it soon became evident that fruit growing would become the chief industry and mainstay of Ringwood and District.

In 1896 a number of the growers formed a horticultural Society for the purpose of overcoming their many fruit difficulties such as fungus diseases, pests etc. also arrange annual shows to exhibit fruit, flowers, poultry, vegetables to stimulate growing and to maintain a regular weekly supply to the Melbourne markets.

Later, the innovation of refrigeration being applied to fruit in the form of cool stores opened up great possibilities, including the shipping of fruit to the London markets. It was decided to call a public meeting and discuss the establishment of a cool store at Ringwood. The meeting was held on 18th June, 1909 and decided that this meeting is of opinion that the time has come for the establishment of a cool store at Ringwood for the benefit of fruit growers, and appointed a committee to carry into effect the foregoing resolution (Committee: Messrs McKinlay, Hann, T. Grant, R. W. Gill and J. B. McAlpin, Hon. Sec.)

The various Govt. Departments were approached on the subject and finally intimated that if the Ringwood and Districts Horticultural Society would guarantee to find 4 per cent. on the outlay and with its close proximity to the railway station there would be no difficulty in getting a cool store at Ringwood. The estimate of the quired guarantee would be approx £280.

The committee after holding numerous meetings and active canvassing, reported that Ringwood growers had already guaranteed £190, leaving £90 to be guaranteed by Croydon, Wonga Park, Wandin, Mt. Dandenong and others. This amount was assured and steps were taken to secure a cool store on a railway site at Ringwood.

At the Annual Meeting held on 25th Nov., 1910, the secretary reported that the Cool Store was in course of con-

struction and will hold 10,000 cases. The membership is 76 and 51 are bona fide commercial fruit-growers. This represents 1120 acres of orchard and the following parts of the district are represented: Ringwood, Croydon, Kilsyth, Vermont, Mitcham, Bayswater. He further reported that at the recent Annual Show close on 1000 entries were staged and about 900 people had paid for admission at the gates.

The meeting decided that the official opening of the Cool Store take place immediately after the opening of the Annual Show to be held on 17th and 18th March, 1911

Ringwood and District Annual Show and Official Opening of the Ringwood Cool Stores.

By His Excellency Sir Thomas David Gibson - Carmichael, K.C.M.G.,

In the New Ringwood Hall, Marquee and Grounds.

Right opposite the Ringwood Railway Station,

Friday and Saturday, 17th and 18th March, 1911.

President: Cr. R. Henderson; Vice-Pres.: Messrs R. Gill and W. McKinlay; treas, Mr. A. Blood Hon. Sec., Mr. J. B. McAlpin.

Luncheon tickets for the official opening of the Cool Stores obtainable from Sec. on or before 11th March, 1911, 5/- each.

Sports each afternoon

Wood chopping contest (40 axemen will compete from all parts of the state). Australia's champions will give an exhibition. A string band and The Reporter District Brass Band will provide music on both days.

Trotting and driving competitions and other equestrian events.

THE OPENING

The Show was opened by the State Governor Sir Thomas Gibson - Carmichael on Friday afternoon (7th March, 1911). The weather was perfect and there was a fairly

large attendance. The President of the Society, Cr. R. Henderson, in introducing the Governor, said that the Ringwood Show was one of the oldest in the State having been established many years ago.

His Excellency congratulated the Society upon the fine display of exhibits and referred briefly to horticultural matters, and said that he had been informed that there was sufficient fruit grown in Victoria to supply the whole of the needs of the Commonwealth. He had pleasure in declaring the Show open.

The Show proved to be highly successful.

THE LUNCHEON (Cool Store)

His Excellency then proceeded to open the new Ringwood Cool Stores. He was introduced to the large crowd which had assembled in front of the Store by the Minister of Agriculture Mr. Graham. He believed that the store would be a very useful institution to the local growers. Mr. Graham, had also told him that the storage capacity was not large enough for the districts requirements. He hoped that before long that additional accommodation would be provided and that the orchard industry in Ringwood would continue to flourish. After stressing the need for greater productivity and increased markets he had very great pleasure in declaring the Cool Stores open.

Mr. E. H. Cameron, MLA, also spoke and voiced regret felt throughout Victoria at the impending departure of His Excellency.

A few notes about the Cool Stores Building and management will be of interest, the cost of erection by the Government was nearly £5,000, and the original plan was drawn up on 30th Sept., 1910. The refrigeration plant was installed by C. A. McDonald Ltd., at a cost of £1322, and the cost of supplying and making a metal road entrance to the store by Mr. L. B. Simpson was £81/11/8.

The storage capacity was 10,000 cases. Later on it was found that additions to the Stores were necessary to meet the ever increasing demand for space and a contract was signed on 3rd June, 1913 by Mr. W. J. May, Contractor, for £2,374/10/3 and at the same time additional refrigeration was supplied and installed by R. Werner & Coy. for £1683, also the Brine concentrating plant was

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Early History of Parish of Ringwood

(By J. K. McCaskill J.P.)

IN December 1915 a group of interested fruitgrowers determined that a Co-operative Company should be formed to purchase the existing Cool Stores from the Victorian Government. An original 68 shareholders applied for 17,377 shares, and were allotted the maximum of 16,350 shares then offered on the basis of one share entitling the holder to one case storage space.

The first Committee of Management appointed comprised Messrs Henry Thatcher, orchardist, F. A. Bloom, orchardist, J. W. Barrett, accountant, William Mackinlay, orchardist, and P. T. Young, Ringwood Manager of the E.S. & A. Bank. Mr. J. G. Aird was appointed secretary and Mr. J. Trainer was the first engineer.

The newly formed company took possession of the cool store from the Victorian Department of Agriculture on 25th Jan., 1916. The building taken over comprised six cool-storage chambers with a capacity of 20,000 cases, two insulated packing rooms and plant and machinery. Substantially this building is the same as the eastern end of the Cool Stores as we know it today.

The buildings purchased did not meet the needs of the district, and early in 1918 additional capital was raised and the building now comprising the western end of the present structure was erected in time to store fruit from the 1917-18 season. This new building had a capacity of 25,200 cases, the contractor being W. J. May & Son, who did the work in such a satisfactory manner that the Committee elected to pay them a bonus.

In 1918, after the end of the fruit season, and through most of 1919, the recently erected part of the building was used substantially for storage of meat for the Government.

In 1918 the Committee decided to affiliate with the newly formed Victorian Fruit-growers Cool Stores Assoc., and in the succeeding years took a very active interest in the affairs of this organisation.

The original engineer, Mr. Trainer, having resigned, Mr. A. J. Tann was appointed engineer in Nov., 1919, and continued to act in that capacity until his death in 1947.

In 1919 the demand for cool storage space continued to increase, and in that year there was a waiting list of fruitgrowers anxious to take up shares in the enterprise.

and thus become entitled to cool storage space.

The year 1921 saw further increases in the number of applicants for shares. To meet this, in part at least, some small extensions to the store were made and the authorised height of stacks in existing storage space was increased.

These early years of development were marked by enthusiasm in the field of primary production that the march of suburbia has taken away. In the earlier years of the century Ringwood was a fruitgrowing district rather than an outer suburb of Melbourne, and the fruitgrowers themselves a group of men banded together by the common hardness of the life.

Orchards were laboriously plowed by horse teams; spraying was by a primitive pump and the chemical sprays available to combat pests were limited by the chemical knowledge of the day to a few well tried formulae.

In some years, great distress fell on the industry when attacks of insect pests such as thrip destroyed almost the entire crop. Prices generally were low and marketing methods laborious. It was a common sight any evening in the season to see horse-drawn high-hooded waggons of a kind seldom seen today, headed down White Horse Rd for Victoria Market, which they would reach early next morning after a night-long trek.

The fruit sold, the growers would then head for home, arriving tired, probably in mid-afternoon, to face the tasks of the day. Today the remaining orchards are quickly and efficiently plowed by tractor, pest control is more scientific and motor trucks haul the fruit to market in a fraction of the time previously required.

But, though these were years of hardship, they were also a more spacious era. The grower had more time to take pride in his produce, and most were enthusiastic exhibitors at the Ringwood Horticultural Show held in March of each year. In an average

year there were 600 - 700 entries in the fruit section—approximately one-third of the total entries in all classes, which incidentally, varied from flowers to fancywork and from wood-chops and horse events to children's sports.

In 1923, and some subsequent years, the Cool Stores entered an exhibit in the Royal Agricultural Society Show. This comprised a tall pyramid of fruit over a wooden frame. Some successes were gained over similar exhibits from other fruit-growing areas, but it is on record in several years that the organisers of the exhibit had great difficulty in persuading individual growers to submit suitable specimens of fruit for inclusion in the exhibit.

In 1924 there is a record of experiments such as wrapping of fruit in oiled paper to facilitate its preservation, and about the same time the Ringwood Horticultural Society made the request that the grading room be made available for fruit packing classes under the supervision of the Dept. of Agriculture. These classes, by further arrangement with the Education Dept., were enthusiastically attended in school hours by children of orchardist families. The Horticultural Society encouraged the project by offering substantial prizes for the best packed cases of fruit exhibited by school children.

In 1924 Mr. P. T. Young, E.S. & A. Bank Manager, who had been a committee member since the Society's incorporation, left the district; his place on the Committee being taken by Mr. H. Pump.

On 1st May, 1925 (the Secretary in the excitement of the moment claimed it to be 31st April), there was a fire in the roof of the eastern end of the store, and considerable damage was done to the roof and outer walls. Fire brigades from as far afield as Hawthorn attended, and saved the storage chambers. There was some damage to fruit, but temporary repairs enabled the fruit to remain in the chambers for the season.

The following years were comparatively uneventful. Of the original Committee of Management Messrs Thatcher and Mackinlay served until their deaths in the mid 1930's (1935 and 1936 respectively). Mr. J. W. Barrett continued in office until his death in 1944.