

RINGWOOD ARTS & CRAFTS SOCIETY

In 1946 a small group of people interested in cultural activities - music, drama, art - met to consider ways of fostering these activities in the district by providing opportunities both for the public and individuals with various cultural talents to enjoy these activities.

The meeting was held in Caterers' Antique Shop (now occupied by the A.N.Z. Bank) opposite the Town Hall Shopping Centre.

The first efforts of the Society consisted of encouraging local choirs by subsidising the purchase of sheet music. A boy's choir was formed but was rather short-lived. To provide opportunities and encouragement for local singers and musicians, it was decided to hold monthly musical evenings in the Lower Town Hall (opposite Dickin's Store) on the South West corner of Melbourne Street.

These Concerts were extremely popular (attendances were up to 100) and were open to everyone.

Membership of the Society was 2/6d and donations were often received from others attending the Concerts.

This was the only revenue of the Society and was largely absorbed in rent for the use of the Hall.

Later in the year a deputation from the Society approached the Borough Council and asked for the use of the Hall rent free on one night per month for non-profit making cultural activities.

The granting of this concession gave a great stimulus to the Society.

Classes were then organised in Art Leather Work, Macrame Painting and Sketching. These were held in the Army Drill Hall on the North East corner of Wantirna Road and Station Street,

where the car park is situated. (The building has since been-removed.)

The next major effort was "Carols by Candlelight" held at the Ringwood Lake Park in December, 1946.

Ringwood Council assisted by paying for the printing of programmes and these, plus candles, were sold by Girl Guides on the evening - the proceeds going to the Childrens' Charity. Assistance was also given by providing lighting and the loan of a truck to act as a stage.

In 1953 a Christmas Tree was set up in conjunction with the Carols and several hundred gifts were donated by the public and given to the Kew Mental Hospital.

Celebrity Concerts were held in the Town Hall to assist local talent. An appeal for funds to help a promising local pianist, Laurence Whiffen, resulted in him being able to go abroad to further his musical studies.

An Art & Craft Show in the lower Town Hall exhibited early work of Roger Webber and Roger Kemp, both local artists who "made good".

The success of its various efforts encouraged the Society to organise an Eisteddfod - the first being held in August 1955. The Sun Newspaper donated £11.11.0 for the Sun Ballad.

In 1957 Ringwood Borough Council sponsored the Ringwood Aria with a prize of £15.15.0.

In 1958 this prize was increased to £21. and a Government grant of £25. was received.

1960 saw the formation of a Drama Group, which later became the "Ringwood Repertory Society".

Over the years both the Government and the Ringwood City Council have increased their support to £50. and £100. respectively.

In 1965 the Society called a public meeting for the

formation of the Ringwood Artists.

During the same year the Society was able to provide Scholarships of £31.10.0 for instrumental and £25. for the most promising voice.

1966: Mrs. E.M. Taylor was made a Life Member of the Society and the Eisteddfod Group became a sub-branch of the Ringwood Arts & Crafts Society.

It is gratifying to note that many of our successful Eisteddfod Competitors have competed in the South Street competitions and made names for themselves by winning the "Sun Aria" and other awards.

Affiliated Groups consist of :-

The Ringwood Eisteddfod
Ringwood Repertory Society
Ringwood Artists
Ringwood Ballet Group
Ringwood Choral Society
Ringwood City Band
Ringwood Film Society

Compiled by Miss M. McKerrow
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