



# THE BULLETIN

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The Legacy Club of Melbourne Inc.

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## EDITORIAL

### Foundation Day Address Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2007 Legatee Tom Butcher

Today, Melbourne Legacy is officially 84 years of age, and it is customary on Foundation Day to deliver an address on a subject that has not been used before, or at least a subject that most of the listeners can no longer recall.

The theme for National Conference this year is *"The changing face of Legacy"*. I would like to speak on the *"changing role of the Legatee"* - comparing the lot of the original Legatees with the Legatees of today.

The original founding Legatees were generally ex-Officers from the A.I.F., the majority from the 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Savige's unit, who set the groundwork for following generations. One early Legatee was J.H. Semmens, the first chairman of the Repatriation Commission – today's DVA. His Victorian Deputy Commissioner was also a Legatee, as were also the majority of other State Deputy Commissioners when Clubs were raised in the other States. It is of interest to note that the Repatriation Act in 1914 provided for various pensions. In the case of total incapacity of a member, a war pension was payable to the member at the rate specified in the schedule – to the wife at 50 per cent of the rate payable to the member, and 13 pounds per annum was payable to each child.

The originals started with nothing but a vision started by General Sir John Gellibrand, which inspired Captain Stan Savige to form a similar Club in Melbourne. Older Legatees here today may recall Legatee Gordon Beith, who lost a leg at Lone Pine in late 1915. He was an original officer of 'C' Company, 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion. Another original in 'C' company was 577 Corporal S.G. Savige of Prahran, together with 121 Quartermaster Sergeant F. Selleck of Numurkah. Selleck was an original of A Company 24<sup>th</sup> Battalion, and was later commissioned. He was one of the very first Legatees, and later became 'Sir Frank' after serving as Lord Mayor of Melbourne. I guess we are into our fourth generation of Legatees at the moment, with the current generation facing vastly different tasks to those of our founding Legatees.

Primarily, Legacy started as a luncheon club for returned servicemen in business, with its basic purpose being the encouragement of business reciprocity. Membership cost five shillings annually.

In the first nine months, the Club had spent £17, and it had a credit balance of £6.15.0. Nevertheless the subscription was lifted to ten shillings a year, with membership at a little over 100. One of the foundation Committeemen was Legatee Prohasky, and he has two generations currently serving in Melbourne – Albert Prohasky and his daughter Helen Kelly.

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GUEST SPEAKER – TUESDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER, 2007

DR JOHN MAYNARD

"PATHOLOGIST IN TWO WARS"



## Foundation Day Address (cont.)

A literature and debating class was first organised in 1926, and within 2 years the teams were competing in Ballarat's famous South Street competition. Annual camps started at the end of 1926, with 32 boys living under canvas on land at Balnarring (now known as Somers) owned by Legatee Savige.

Girls classes followed in 1927, followed by formation of a girls Junior Legacy Club. This provided an opportunity for social contact between the Junior Legacy Clubs and by 1928 there was a demonstration of physical culture and eurythmics at the Town Hall. This then became an annual event. As early as October 1926, rosters were drawn up to ensure that every member attended the gym or debating classes at least monthly. Several members who failed to turn up for luncheons or junior classes or to pay dues were warned, and some were struck off the roll. Membership at that time was about 150.

During 1924, a number of committees were formed, with the Board of Management meeting on a monthly basis. All other committees were sub-committees of the Board of Management. Many here today will remember Legatee 'Kem' Kemsley, who was President 1932-33. He was a frequent critic of what he called "slackness" among Legatees and other returned soldiers, and was an expert in bringing Legatees into line. He will be remembered in particular for the wonderful job he did in resuscitating through Legacy the movement to build the Shrine of Remembrance. He was Chairman of the Shrine Trustees for some years before his death.

The depression years added further burdens to members of Legacy – many resources were concentrated on finding employment for juniors. All told, during the 30s, Legacy Clubs in mainland capital cities found just under 20,000 jobs. Melbourne Legacy found about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of these, whilst country clubs filled about another 1,000. Many of these jobs were of a temporary nature, but nevertheless many apprenticeships were obtained. This often required Legacy to pay for tools of trade and books, and often to make up wages, due to the poor wages paid to apprentices.

It was a common belief during and after the depression that long periods of unemployment turned youths towards petty crimes. Early in the Depression, Melbourne Legacy formed a close relationship with the Courts, when one of its members became a Probation Officer for the Children's Court taking responsibility for junior Legatees or potential juniors who fell into the clutches of the law. After a time, this was extended to other courts and more Legatees became involved.

The unemployment rate did not fall below the 8% rate until 1940, when the wartime requirements for the war effort resulted in manpower laws being introduced. One worked where directed.

Troubles with Junior Legatees and the law were also a feature of Legacy life after WW2. The influence of Legacy and its' good name was responsible for many an errant youth receiving a dressing down by a Senior Police Officer rather than a court appearance. However, not all lads were so fortunate, and were compelled to face a Magistrate, sometimes receiving a custodial sentence.

The matter of widows' pensions has always been a matter for concern amongst Legatees. Legacy, in conjunction with the RSL made efforts to ameliorate the lot of war widows. It was felt they should have a minimum pension of two guineas per week without review or deduction. This was somewhat hampered by the lack of a Minister for Repatriation. From 1918 to 1922 there was a Minister for Repatriation, but from 1923 to 1928 Repatriation records show there was no Minister. Responsibility for pensions lay with the Treasury.

It was during the Bruce Government that a Minister for Repatriation was again appointed, and he advised in August 1928 that cabinet had approved that in assessing widow's pensions, earnings were not to be taken into account. Under this decision, widows pensions hitherto affected by earnings would be increased to 2 guineas per week. However, for those widows whose husbands death had not been determined to be service related, there was nothing in the way of pensions. New South Wales had a State Pension, and a baby bonus, but that State was an exception.

In Melbourne, when a veteran died of a "non-accepted" disease or illness, such cases frequently resulted in great hardship for the families, who were often left with no income on the death of the husband and father.



## Foundation Day Address (cont.)

One of the Club rules provided for a small fine (about 6d) to be imposed on any member who missed a luncheon, and no member should be absent from three consecutive luncheons without obtaining leave of absence. That it was strictly interpreted is evident from the fact that the names of three foundation members had been deleted from the Club rolls owing to failure of the members to attend. Additionally, regular membership reviews were held, and recalcitrant members, after opportunity for explanation, were, if that was unsatisfactory, struck from the roll.

One who was struck from the roll was Captain Albert Jacka, VC, MC and bar. Private Jacka was awarded a V.C. for his bravery at Courtney's Post, Gallipoli Peninsula. He had a rapid rise through the ranks, and was appointed a Captain on 15<sup>th</sup> March 1917. He rose no further, a cause attributed to his frequent disputes with superior officers. Most of the founding members were known to each other, and membership was open only to officers and ex-officers. This did not last long as the Rules made no distinction of rank. It is worthy of note that the man who gave Legacy its soul – Legatee Frank Doolan saw service as a Sapper.

Lunch was often at the Victorian Coffee Palace at a cost of 2/6, being 2/- (two deeners for the meal, and a zack (sixpence) for the provident fund. After moving to the Hotel Australia, lunch cost 2/6, (the old half a crown) so there was nothing left for the Provident Fund. The Luncheons were later held again at the Victoria Coffee Palace. Unlike today, luncheons were "dry", although changeover dinners were more sociable.

In the first five years of the life of Melbourne Legacy, there were no paid staff, much of the secretarial work being carried out by the staff of Legatee President Cohen. Board meetings were often held in his office. Some Legatees who were in business, used their own staff for typing, records etc. The first paid staff was in 1928, when a typist was employed at a salary of three pounds a week.

Fund raising was also the task of the Legatees. One of the original ideas arose from Mr Hugh J. Ward, who had the idea to form the "League of the telephone" by which it was arranged that the whole of the 60,000 subscribers in the metropolitan area be communicated with. Each Legatee had allotted to him 10 pages of the telephone directory, and it then became his job to approach a live firm or individual – one for each page – and suggest that the firm or individual get in touch with, or circularise, at his own expense, all the other telephone subscribers appearing on the same page, requesting contributions for the National War Memorial, now the Shrine of Remembrance.

The main role of Legacy was in "safeguarding the interests of soldiers" and "developing a broad outlook on national problems" with seven broad headings:

Comradeship / The Preference question / Efficiency / Education /  
Business reciprocity / Service / National Development

After Legatee Frank Doolan gave Legacy its soul in 1925, the care of widows and children became the main task of Legatees. In those days, Legacy was financed by member's subscriptions, fines and levies. Many Legatees dug into their own pockets to help their charges, which also included seeking employment for the children of deceased veterans. Legatees were also expected to assist in finding employment for unemployed veterans at that time.

There were over 3000 soldiers orphans in Victoria at that time. After consulting with members of the War Widows and Widowed Mothers, and the War Widows Guild, boys classes followed, and Boys Junior Legacy Club was formed. It was a belief amongst the early members that boys with time on their hands would be pursuing girls, and that healthy physical training would channel their thoughts into better things. I don't think anything has changed between boys and girls.

Legatee Aaron Beattie, who was a leading physical culture instructor, was instrumental in obtaining the services of the Director of Physical Training at Scotch College as permanent Instructor. It was not until 8 September 1926 that gymnasium classes got under way. The boys were issued free of charge with sandshoes, singlets, and shorts. The efforts of Legatees Savige and Kemsley resulted in the sandshoes, singlets and shorts being made available on credit by various suppliers, with no guarantee of payment. Such was the standing in the community of the founding fathers of Melbourne Legacy.



## Foundation Day Address (cont.)

This meant that Legacy had two classes of families, those "accepted by the Repatriation Department" and those "non accepted". During the periods of the formation of Boys Classes and Girls classes, Legacy had Doctors and Dentists examining the children for medical and dental problems. During the Depression in particular, it was found that many more "non-accepted" families were suffering from malnutrition than from "accepted" families.

The Financial Emergency Act was introduced in 1931. This resulted in a general reduction of expenditure. However, there were no reductions of expenditure in the rate of pension paid to incapacitated soldiers and widows and children of deceased members whose deaths were related to service. The maximum rate of pension to **children** of incapacitated members was reduced, and a wife married or child born to an incapacitated member of the Forces subsequent to 1 October 1931 were excluded from pension benefits. A 22.5% deduction was imposed upon pensions and living allowances of dependants such as wives, mothers, fathers, sisters, etc. This 22.5% pension reduction was eased to 10% in 1933.

Our original founding Legatees, and those WW1 veterans who joined the Legacy family between the wars generally had it tough, facing problems rarely seen today. Melbourne refused to increase its membership above 175, despite having a waiting list. These Legatees were distributed through 37 Melbourne suburbs. However, 70% lived in just nine suburbs, and two-thirds of them owned cars. But a Legatee could be asked to visit any suburb to fulfill his duty to his charges.

Melbourne Legacy was forced to suspend all of its children's activities for five months late in 1937 due to the infantile paralysis epidemic sweeping the country. Whilst things improved after WW2, nevertheless the vastly increased number of widows and children required a large intake of Legatees. For a period, invitations to join the organisation took in to consideration the employment of the proposed member, but the quotas had been dropped. However, the invitations were later extended to people deemed suitable to serve the family rather than their occupation as such.

So to the members of today, I use the immortal words of one of our Prime Ministers, the one who misplaced his trousers whilst in a friendly country, quoting from George Bernard Shaw's *Methuselah*: "Life's not meant to be easy, but take courage child for it can be delightful". Compared to our original Legatees it is fair to quote Harold MacMillan, when he said "*Most of our people have never had it so good.*"

**Legatee Tom Butcher**

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS (cont.)

All Junior Legatees & Mums join us for a  
**RAFTING DAY OUT**

Sunday November 11th 2007

**The Yarra River, close to Melbourne is an excellent location for a fun & exciting day out where participants learn new skills and work together to successfully complete a river trip while negotiating Grade 1 & 2 rapids.**

Call Lynne White to confirm attendance on  
9663 3564 or [lynne.white@legacymelb.com.au](mailto:lynne.white@legacymelb.com.au)

Pick up: Arts Centre at 8.45 am  
Drop Off: Arts Centre at 6.00 pm

**We need 10 people to confirm this activity  
or it will need to be cancelled**

