

Woodend RSL – A Brief History

1918 - The Woodend R.S.S.A.I.L.A was born when Reg Pollard was invalided back to Woodend from The Great War and teamed up with other returned men to form the Committee. They welcomed others home, visited the hospitalised, found jobs for their mates and provided welfare to the widows and orphans. Funds were raised with Old Time Balls, dances, Christmas Parties, picnics for diggers' children at Hanging Rock, cricket matches, raffles, euchre parties, and donations.

1922 – After a decline in membership between the wars the RSL was revived and meetings were held at the Mechanics Institute and later at the Woodend Race Course where an Army Camp was established. Funds were raised for renovations to the Memorial Clock Tower. Each year the RSL attended the Dawn Service at the Memorial Cross, Mt Macedon.

1939 – The Bushfire Appeal was given relief, the Red Cross became active, also the Emergency Service Army Reserve Comforts Fund was formed and a canteen staffed by ex-A.I.F members. A public meeting was held to raise funds with the aim of building a Memorial Hall. After a generous donation from Mr Keating, the site was chosen and two Nissen huts purchased.

1940 - An old Army ambulance was purchased and staffed by volunteers. Visits were made to hospitals and donations of wood were given to needy. A wireless set was purchased for soldiers in the camp and a donation made to London Bombing Appeal.

1943 - The Ladies Auxiliary and Social club were both formed and worked tirelessly to raise funds for the RSL. and Volunteer Defence Corps, selling War Savings Bonds, Austerity Loan Bonds, and supporting Red Cross and the Comforts Fund.

1947 - The Nissen huts were installed and the Auxiliary raised funds to furnish building. The Woodend RSL Sub-branch was formally registered.

1949 - The Woodend Diggers Race Club was formed and donations came in regularly to the Building Fund.

1955 - The Memorial Hall was officially opened.

1958 – Plans were made to add an annex to the Nissen huts. The building was now being used by Youth Club, Scouts, Play centre, and the Blind institute so it was necessary to build a kitchen. Races at Hanging Rock saw the RSL conducting a spinning wheel to raise funds.

1967 - The Tasmanian Bush Fire Relief Fund was well supported with donations. A Guard of Honour for Sir Rohan Delacombe's visit to the Memorial Cross was organised.

1970 - A slump in membership prompted discussion on closing Hall however members rallied. An Anti-Aircraft Bofors gun from Bandiana was obtained.

1974 - Bricks were laid covering the Nissen huts. An Honour Roll was prepared for local volunteers from 1939-45.

1983 - Ash Wednesday fires Relief Appeal started and extensive works undertaken at the hall.

1986 - Bingo night held for Lions Club. Meals on Wheels using kitchen five days a week also catering for Council meetings.

1991 - Application approved for a Licensed Club.

1992 - War Graves Plaque at Woodend Cemetery approved.

1994 - The social club disbanded and members incorporated into the Womens' Auxiliary who formed the Black Forest Day Club bringing together the lonely, disadvantaged, and isolated in the community.

2008 - The roof of the club rooms was found to be faulty and an inspection confirmed the problems and the hall declared unsafe and was closed. Other venues were used for meetings and functions. A vote was taken and it was agreed to restore the building. The Department of Veteran's Affairs contributed and fund-raising commenced with the Women's Auxiliary playing a prominent part in this.

2009 - Restoration works were completed and the clubhouse reopened.

2010 - Facilities including the kitchen and toilets were refurbished and the bar renovated.