

A SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT HISTORY FROM 1946 TO 1999

In 1946, the Community Service Committee of the Rotary Club of Bendigo felt that there was a need for a controlled youth camp in the Bendigo Region on the premise that the camp would be used by the numerous youth groups being formed after World War II and those already in existence.

After careful consideration, the Board decided to proceed and appointed a committee to take charge of the project. An appeal to club members was made and in response, an amount of £700 was donated.

The lease of some 30 acres of land on the banks of the Campaspe River at Axedale (portion of the Police paddock) was negotiated, three wartime huts from Fortuna were acquired and a kitchen constructed using a former military kitchen building donated by the Bendigo City Council.



Following several working bees to erect fences, install paths, paint buildings and carry out other renovation and maintenance works, the camp was officially opened on 3rd April 1948 by the then District Governor John M Edger, assisted by Club President Dr Eric Biggs, before a large crowd of club members and visitors.

The 1950s

During this period, a range of development works was undertaken, the most notable of which, were:

- The erection of a building to service as an office, first aid post and Supervisor's sleeping quarters;
- Lining and bird proofing sleeping huts and Dining Hall;
- The erection of water tanks;
- The installation of a new power plant;
- Conversion of the of the river pump from petrol driven to electric operation and relocation of it above flood level.
- Installation of a full sized basketball court/tennis court;
- Establishment of an outdoor chapel.

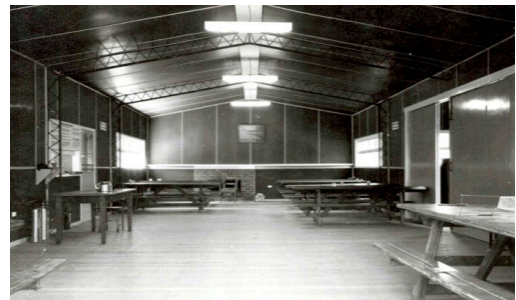


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The 1960s

Improvements, additions and maintenance works continued through the 1960s with major works being:-

- The construction of a new Recreation Hall, adjoining the Dining Hall, in 1961-62 at a cost of £2,000. The hall was opened in May 1962 and named "The Smyth Hall" in recognition of Bendigo Rotarian Vic Smyth, who had been the main driving force behind the establishment of the camp.
- The replacement of the old wartime-hut Dining Hall with a newly constructed building at a cost of \$8,700. It work was funded with the aid of a Government Grant on a one-for-one basis and the hall was officially opened in June 1969 by the Hon. J F Rossiter MLA.



The 1970s

With the Camp entering its third decade of operation and the continued growth in usage, further upgrades and extensions were becoming increasingly necessary and a successful submission to the Victorian Government in late 1971 saw a grant of \$10,000 being made available.

This together with other grants and donations enabled the following works, amongst other minor works, to be undertaken:-

- Connection of mains electricity throughout the camp;
- Installation of a coolroom in the kitchen;
- Extension of the caretakers residence;
- Construction of new toilet/shower blocks and boiler house at a cost of \$16,000;
- Resurfacing of the basketball/tennis court area

Other significant happenings were the creation of a full-time caretaker position early in the 1970s and the offering of in-house catering services some eight years later.

In 1975, some 27 year since the start of the Rotary Youth Camp at Axedale, it was reported that the Club had spent \$47,500 on capital works in addition to the various government grants and donations.

In addition it was estimated that the volunteer labour and free materials donated would be in the vicinity of a further \$150,000.

The 1980s

The 1980s saw a decade of continued extensions, upgrades and maintenance. Those of significance included:-

- Pressurising the drinking water system and increasing storage capacity;
- Completion of renovations and painting of all bunk houses at a cost of around \$23,000;

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- Upgrading of sewer drains and associated effluent drainage channel;
- Erection of a new replacement flying fox to conform to DLL regulations;
- Acquisition of a Furphy water cart for general and fire protection use;
- Acquisition of three Nissan huts from Bendigo Ordnance Factory at a cost of \$6,100;
- Planting of several hundred trees. It should be noted that tree planting at the camp site has been a priority throughout the life of the camp.



It was reported that in 1985/6 the lease of the Camp area at Axedale was completed with the Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands (not sure why this had not occurred much earlier). The lease was for a period of 21 years and was signed on behalf of the Rotary Club by the National Trustees Company, which also paid the rental of \$100 per year for the first three years as a donation.

The 1990s

Two projects of note were undertaken in the early 1990s being:-

- Construction of an observatory building to house a Newtonian reflecting telescope;
- Construction of a piped drainage and storage scheme to capture runoff from the roofs of several of the buildings on the site to augment the pumped supply from the River.



Also early in the decade, concerns were mounting about the continued viability of the camp as the financial reserves were drying up. Had it not been for club members providing interest-free loans the camp could well have been closed.

The situation was later exacerbated by the challenge of meeting new guidelines of quality assurance and the need for a huge face lift to meet rising community expectations in camping venues.

Following a lot of soul-searching within the club and the conduct of a strategic review, it was concluded that the club alone was no longer in a position to maintain the future viability of the camp and, as a consequence, District 9800 was offered and accepted responsibility for the Camp with a view to rebuilding it to accommodate special needs groups.

A D9800 Steering Committee, under the leadership of PP Paul Kirkpatrick, of the Rotary Club of Bendigo Sandhurst, was formed to provide a recreation camp facility for people of all abilities, under a clearly defined set of aims and objectives.

At District 9800 level the records show that the Camp was incorporated on 1 November 1999 as Rotary Camp Inc. trading as Camp Getaway.

Club records show that the transfer of this Club's long standing, over 50 years, of its Youth Camp project has now been completed