

# BYGONE DAYS: Geelong - 100 years ago

Week 2: January 9<sup>th</sup> to January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1923

**Crime and punishment** were on the increase in 1923. In the article *"Police Court Work Increase"* the Geelong Advertiser quantified the increase.

*"The cases dealt with at the City Court for the past year constitute a record. They show a big increase in the number of those on the previous year, when the total reached 2804. This year the number aggregated 3030 was cases. For the year 1921, the total reached 2392 showing that litigation in Geelong is progressing within the district."*

Court staff numbers remained the same and the Chief Clerk, Mr Bieske, had to work some nights to complete his work.

Appearing in the City Court was "An Old Bushman" on January 12<sup>th</sup>. Thomas McDonald, a middle aged man, used this term to describe himself to the magistrate. On January 11<sup>th</sup>, in East Geelong, he was arrested for having insufficient means of support.

*".... He had insufficient means of support and was hereby an idle and disorderly person. He pleaded not guilty... Residents of East Geelong had complained of the accused who, to his (the sergeant's) own knowledge had sat under a tree all day. Constable Rankin...said the accused on one occasion asked him for money for a beer and he had been told to leave the city... "*

Mr McDonald said he arrived before Christmas with 14 pounds and was looking for work. The constable said he visited Geelong three times a year and spent money on drink. Mr Conlon, the magistrate, asked him to prove he had ".. sufficient means of support. McDonald replied: his ability to work.

*" Mr Conlon P.M. sentenced McDonald to three month's imprisonment and advised him to get work after he finished his term."*

NB: Australia didn't have

unemployment benefits until July 1945.<sup>1</sup>



The old Geelong Police Court in Gheringhap Street was built about 1865 and demolished in July 1936. State Library Victoria ID [1726019 2](#)

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Summer also meant snakes. A young boy, Peter Miller, who was spending his holiday in Tresco was bitten in the arm by a snake.

*"He immediately scarified the wound, making it bleed freely, and hurried to where he is staying. After rubbing some Condy's crystals well into the injured part, he was taken to a neighbour, nurse Bruen, who has had considerable experience in the treatment of snake bites. After watching the patient for a time, she was quite satisfied that his prompt action had prevented any serious action of the poison."*

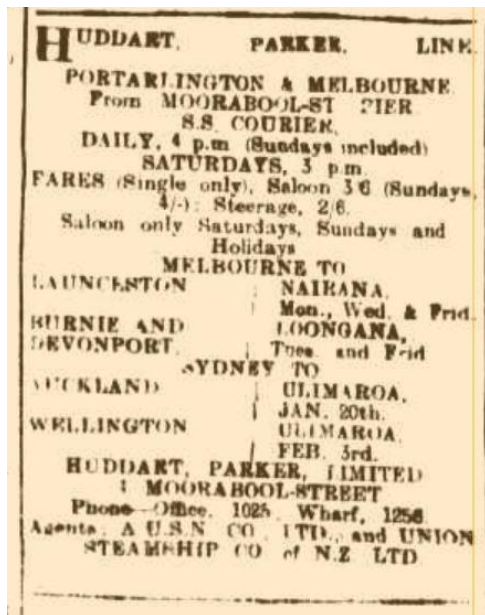
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The article, "**On The Beaches**" reported on the holiday period once more.

*"Compared with the animation that prevailed during the holidays, the beaches were quiet yesterday; and the lack of stir was doubtless accentuated by the weather which was certainly not summer-like."*

Transvaal Square lawns and Eastern beach were still popular. Many were day trippers from Melbourne who arrived on the steamer, S.S. *Courier*, at Moorabool Street wharf.

*"Geelong must be attractive, when visitors are anxious to spend the last moment in it – or perhaps it is merely the case that some want to get their full money's worth."*



An advertisement in the Geelong Advertiser shows the prices and destinations for the Courier.

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Town water was extended to Chilwell residents in 1923.

*"It having been decided to extend the water mains to give better service to Chilwell residents and industries south of Fyans Street, between Latrobe Terrace and Pakington Street, the Water and Sewerage Commissioners recently called for tenders.... "*

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Motor transport was still a novelty and it featured frequently in the press. It was reported that a **"Motor Bus Wheel Collapses."**

*"When the Belmont motor bus was approaching the corner of Moorabool and Ryrie Streets about 5 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, one of the wheels collapsed. Fortunately the bus was in the act of pulling up or there might have been serious circumstances....The iron rim of the wheel was shattered and portions of the wheel were scattered over the footway... Several persons in the vicinity at the time were greatly startled by the explosion of the pneumatic tyre, which went off as if a gun had been discharged."*

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Mr Walter Charles King of Geelong West was driving to Melbourne on the main road when he ...

*"... encountered a team of bullocks, and colliding with one, doing considerable damage to the steering gear of his car, which he had to leave on the side of the road whilst he came back to Geelong to secure necessary parts. He left a Dunlop motor tyre, a rim, tools and sundries in his car, thinking they would be safe until he returned. He was disappointed, as someone stripped the car of these, as well as other articles, which he values at 14 pounds."*

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**"Attracting Immigrants"** was an important topic in 1923.

A meeting of Geelong's Chamber of Commerce Council commented on the Prime Minister's desire to provide information for people seeking to immigrate to Australia.

Mr R Purnell said he had spoken with business people in America who; *"knew little or nothing about Australia."*

Alderman Hitchcock, as vice president of the New Settlers League, said he had been ...

*"... brought in touch with immigration matters and when he went abroad next year, he intended to concentrate on getting immigrants to Victoria which could absorb a very large number."*

Mr Gurr suggested a leaflet to ... *"...direct people to Australia House, where informative booklets could be obtained."* Mr F.J. Newberry said ... *"the authorities were sending out the wrong kind of immigrant. All trades were starving for artisans and these were the men who should be sent out."*

Geelong Advertiser's daily Editorial, more often than not, referred to current political events, rather than dwelling on local issues. There was no exception to this practice on Wednesday, January 11<sup>th</sup>. However, the national issue of immigration had local relevance too.

*"The influx of Italians, though it is still a trickle rather than a stream is attracting some attention. A fairly large party reached Melbourne only a few days ago and it was announced they intended to remain in this State.... In some quarters this causes uneasiness and resentment part of which is mainly due to prejudice and ignorance..."*

The editor was critical of some north Queenslanders who consider Italians not to be 'white' at all. He stated that they work and live in country areas, not like Greeks and they work hard in the cane fields. Collectively, they buy farms on a hire-purchase scheme and stick together until the property is their own. Lands around Innisfail are passing into Italian hands and they are not 'good mixers'.

*"The spectacle perturbs the imagination of some who look for a homogeneous Australia, and we may agree with them to the extent of saying that British stock would be preferable. But British stock will not, apparently go on the land in any appreciable numbers and work as these men will do... The sum of the whole matter seems in fairness to be, that if we cannot or will not fill and possess the land ourselves, ... we should not object to some share in its settlement being carried out by people like the Italians."*

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Activities for boys and young men were numerous in the community, but girls and young ladies had fewer opportunities. The Young Women's Christian Association, (YWCA) catered exclusively for the female sex.

*"The Y.M.C.C Thrift Club has been much appreciated by the numbers of Geelong girls during the past year. The idea of saving always appeals, but the practice of the saving habit is not often carried out, even by those ambitious for wealth. That the thrift club helps is shown in the statement supplied by the State Savings Bank for the year 1922."*

A total of 338 pounds 13 shillings and 10 pence had been saved by women from their employment in Geelong factories.

*"This statement was received by the Blue Triangle Community Committee this week."*

The Blue Triangle Community Committee was an organisation of middle-class women established in Geelong to help young girls, aged 14, to prepare them with life skills. The age of 14 was the year

many children were expected to leave school and seek employment. According to the Australian Women's Register internet site, in collaboration with **The University of Melbourne** and **The National Foundation for Australian Women (NFAW)** :

*"Employers provided support, including an annual donation. Industry-based teams played basketball on Saturday afternoons, and tennis clubs and a swimming club were formed. Club rooms were secured, and educational and social activities were held for Senior girls (those over 20) and younger 'Girl Citizens'. "3*

This ~~was~~ the world of your Grand Parents and Great Grandparents.

#### Sources

1. <http://www.aph.gov.au>
2. State Library Victoria ID 1726019 2
3. <https://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/PR00524b.htm>
4. Geelong Advertiser, January 9th to 16<sup>th</sup>, 1923