

BYGONE DAYS: Geelong - 100 years ago

Week 16: April 17th to April 23rd, 1923

Prime Minister, the Honourable Stanley Melbourne Bruce, made his first “official” visit by motor car, to Geelong on April 16th.

“The Prime Minister was the guest of Ald. J.C. King at dinner. ...Subsequently, Mr Bruce declared open the Comunn Na Feinne competition, after which he attended the invitation concert of the Corio Capital branch of the National Federation. He motored back to Melbourne after the concert.”

The Prime Minister gave a very “powerful address” at the Masonic Hall, where the dinner was held. Alderman King then gave his address to the gathering expressing:

*“.....his pleasure at the promise of Mr Bruce to again visit Geelong and spend the day on – as the Mayor hesitated, the **wag** called ‘The Barwon River’. The Geelong people roared. The Mayor assured the Prime Minister that the river would not interest him, as it was a matter of State, but the interjection came again most appropriately, ‘A very bad state , too’.”*



Note: A Wag is slang term for a witty comical, humorous person.

Technology always marches on and that was the case when the Post Office moved to reorganise its telegraphic section. An engineer and two assistants from Melbourne had arrived to commence the work.

“The whole of the apparatus is to be removed, and new and updated instruments installed. It is estimated the work will cost 200 pounds. When completed, the office will be equipped with electrical apparatus equal to that installed in the Melbourne city office, and will be among the most up-to-date in the Commonwealth.”

As part of the upgrade, the ‘sports mad’ Geelong citizens decided to instal a new telegraph line.

“At the same time, it has been decided to instal an additional line at the Geelong Oval for sending telegraphic messages on the occasion of football matches or other gatherings.”

Trams still dominated the public transport sector, and the City Council received a communication:

“...from the Electric Light and Traction Company stating that ‘the company has in hand the preliminary work for the North Geelong tram system.”

It went on to say, in regard to the duplication of the Ryrie Street track, that:

“...the company is waiting for advice from the Newtown and Chilwell Council relative to drainage in Latrobe Terrace.”

North Geelong residents would be grateful for the progress made in the installation of a sewer to their suburb when it was reported that:

"The progress made with the sewerage of North Geelong and the Lunan Estate is such that it is expected that Lunan Estate and Victoria Avenue properties will be linked up by the end of the month. The pumping station in Griffin's Gully has reached stage where preparations are being made for the pumps. Once the motor is installed, house connections will be possible. Is expected that the whole of North Geelong will be ready for sewerage by the end of the year."

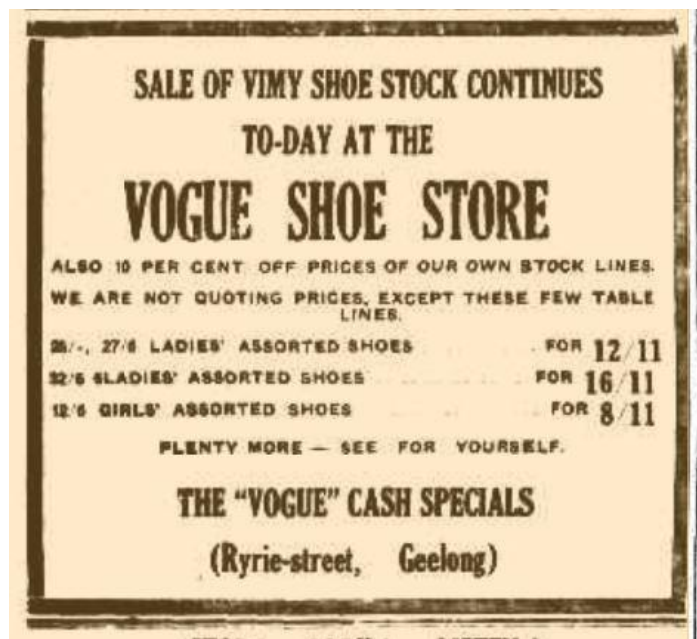
Anzac Day a holiday? That was the question raised by the Geelong Advertiser reported the week before the Day's commemoration. Even though the day was gazetted as a holiday there were concerns.

"Concern has been created amongst the number of the local businessmen regarding the closing of their shops on Wednesday next - Anzac day - and from expressions given affect to yesterday, it is hardly likely that the day will be recognised as a holiday so far as Geelong is concerned... Master drapers, grocers, butchers and others have talked the matter over an the consensus of opinion is that the day should not be recognised as a holiday."

These businesses were willing to close their shops for their employees during the time of the service and ceremony to be completed by the mayor and others.

"Many of the employers feel that in the past that day has been given up too much to amusements and picnicking, whereas, it should be one of commemoration and reverence."

When interviewed about the decision, Mr E. J. Fairlie, representative of No 12 District Council of the R.S.I.L.A (Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia) and president of the Geelong Sub-branch said he was disappointed because:



"...Geelong has sufficient in the matter of observance to fill the whole day - services in each of the various churches in the morning, the procession, and in the afternoon the general commemoration service, which has been found in past years to be very acceptable to the public is the best method of commemorating the day. The numbers of people attending the commemoration service during the past two years should have been sufficient indication to the traders as to public opinion in the matter."

Geelong Advertiser's Editorial on April 23rd, commented that the celebration of Anzac Day has become half-hearted, but still many people are indignant about the lack of a full day holiday. He also commented on the traders' view of the day being used for sport and picnics.

"We doubt there is any cure for that. This modern age has to a large extent lost the capacity for commemorating save by festivity, and this is particularly true in countries like Australia, where life is so much a thing of the open air. Holidays get less and less 'holy' days. This fact has to be reckoned with in any preparations that may be made for the observance of even such an anniversary as Anzac Day. Private memories will abound, and public devotions be entered on with right goodwill, but it is useless to expect the mass of the population to spend the whole day as a time of mourning."

A resident of Foster Street in South Geelong reported to the South Geelong Police Station that:
"while walking in Verner Street, between 3 and 4 o'clock in the afternoon, in company with his wife and two children, a bullet from a rifle whistled past between his head and that of his wife." His wife complained of temporary deafness from the bullet's noise.

Shortly afterwards, another bullet was fired. The man thought the bullet's origin was from a vacant block of land, where bushes were growing. He couldn't see anyone and thought it might be young boys firing at birds. Then, within 30 yards of the corner, the man alleged he saw a boy standing in the back yard of a house. *"He raised what appeared to be a pea rifle and fired in direction of the railway line."* The man went to the house and a young boy denied any shot was discharged.

It seems the story was 'discredited at the police station'. Constable Aldridge went to the reported residence, but nobody was home. Next day, the constable went back and interviewed a 12 years old boy who produced a RSA action (Republic of South Africa) 0.22 calibre rifle which he said his brother shot at a magpie. It appears the 12 year old tried to blame his deceased brother, but the constable followed through and found the boy's story to be a lie.

"When further evidence has been gathered it is likely that proceedings will be taken against the youth."

The Joy Ark, situated on Geelong's Waterfront near Eastern Beach, was soon to disappear, because it had been purchased by the Harbour Trust.



"....many residents will agree that the eyesore to the beach has been removed. It, however, will deprive Geelong of a popular place of amusement, especially for dancing purposes."

The Harbour Trust gained possession on June 1st and intended to remove it to the Yarra Stret Pier

where it could be used to provide extra shed space for the storage of goods waiting to shipped.

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Market Square's re-development took another step forward with the leases of Market Square Shops being terminated, but traders still had twelve months to move. The Council's notice related to the tenants in the "old bluestone building" It was claimed that: *"tethering of horses on market days may be affected."* It was pointed out that the nearby Haymarket had plenty of space to accommodate vehicles.

Reference

1 Photograph of Stanley Melbourne Bruce PM Mitchell Library NSW, Number FL1272380 / FL1272398

2. Photograph of Joy Ark State Library of Victoria Record 9916808533607636