

BYGONE DAYS: Geelong - 100 years ago

Week 17: April 24th to April 30th, 1923

In 1817 the Englishman, Robert Owen, introduced the phrase: **"Eight hours' labour, Eight hours' recreation, Eight hours' rest"**.¹ In Australia, Stonemasons were granted an Eight Hour Day in 1856, but for the remainder of the working population it wasn't until much later.

THIS DAY. — THIS DAY.
GEELONG EIGHT HOUR ANNIVERSARY.
GRAND PROCESSION and SPORTS MEETING.
To be held on MONDAY, 29th APRIL, at KARDINIA OVAL.
5 BICYCLE EVENTS 5
Champions of N.S.W. and Victoria will be competing.
Harmers' Events—120 yards, 1 Mile, Relay Race.
Dancing, Hornpipe, Irish Jig, Highland Fling, Whippet Races, Flat and Hurdle, Verry-Go-Round for Children, and Side Shows: Boys' and Girls' Races. Luncheon provided on Ground at 12.30. Publican's Booth, in charge of J. Scully, Licensee. Workers, this is your day, so roll up and patronise your own sports. Plenty of enjoyment for all classes.
A. KING, Secretary.

TO-NIGHT. — TO-NIGHT.
8 ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE 8
EIGHT HOURS' NIGHT.
GRAND EUCHRE and DANCE.
ST. MARY'S HALL, MONDAY NIGHT.
8 till 12 p.m. Valuable Euchre Prizes.
Gent's 1/6; Ladies 1/-.
N. Walker's Orchestra.
A. KING, Secretary.

A GRAND BALL will be held in the ANAKIE HALL on MONDAY, April 30th. Good Floor. Good music and supper. Gents 2/6. Ladies 1/6. C. MINNS and R. DALY, Hon. Secs.

In Geelong, support for the Eight Hour Day cause was strong. It was a gazetted public holiday and supported with a procession and events.

Saturday's Advertiser on April 28th reported on the arrangements.

"The celebration will really begin with a social in the Masonic Hall, Yarra Street, tonight, when the leader of the Labour Party in the Assembly (Mr Prendergast) will be present, while a member of the Party in the Federal House is also expected. To-morrow, the local Eight Hours Day Committee will entertain 30 or 40 delegates from NSW and Victoria Unions (who are coming to the social) to a motor drive to Lorne leaving at 9am. The outward journey will be via the Ocean Road and return by way of Benwerrin and Deans Marsh.... Dinner will be served at Lorne and tea at Winchelsea."

The Advertisements attached from page 1 of the Geelong Advertiser on April 30th, show the enormous organisation for the day. Sport and other entertainments were scheduled.

Of course, the Trades Hall was heavily involved:

"The procession, started from the Trades Hall at 12:30, headed by Saint Augustine's Band, will proceed

down Yarra Street, along Malop Street and up Moorabool Street to the park. Many trade displays will be shown, also the 44 hours tableau."

The Eight Hours Day was a gazetted Public Holiday in 1879 and for many years parades were a major feature of the day. In 1934, the name of the day was changed to Labour Day and it remains the same even today. It is celebrated on the second Monday of March. ²

One comment about Anzac Day's observance came from an elderly citizen who: *"In his opinion, it was a child-like way of giving to such an historic occasion such a name. He felt that if April 25 was recognised as Gallipoli day more people would appreciate its significance and joining solemn commemoration for the great deeds of the Australian soldiers."*

One last word on the ANZAC commemoration comes from a letter to the Editor. Alys Bartlett expressed a strong opinion about the day and the traders' attitude for the coming 1924.

"Sir, - Will you kindly allow me space in your paper to express my views in regard to Anzac day, April 5th 25th, 1924. I think it rather useless to wait until within a week to ask the business people and managers of entertainments to close their houses: but keep at it, so that they will realise that if it were not for the boys who died over there, not forgetting to those who have returned (some maimed for life) they would have to do the bidding of the Hun. Then I think when the time comes, they will feel it their duty to celebrate in the true spirit and automatically close and keep the 25th of April now and forever sacred. Surely it will not be asking too much. Yours etc."

The summer of 1923 was hot and even in May there were problems with the supply of fresh water. Two articles related to efforts in securing water.



"As a result of the boring on the Harbour Trust's Lake View Farm an excellent supply for stock purposes has been found at a depth of 220 feet (67 metres). The bore is down at that, and the water has risen 120 feet in the bore. This supply is believed to be an extensive one and will be worked by windmills."

At Batesford, fresh water was scarce and local residents used empty milk cans and small barrels to obtain water from a standpipe at Bell Post Hill.

"Not for very many years have the farmers and orchardists in the Batesford valley experienced such

a dry season as at present. The river is dry for long distances. It is only here and there that those who are fortunate enough to have the river through their holdings can obtain water, which is only fit however for animals."

It was claimed that waterholes, that have not been dry for years, have no water at all.

Citizens of Australia, today, have been affected by an event that occurred in England in 1923. If that event didn't take place, Australia and the British Commonwealth of Nations would be substantially different.

Geelong Citizens, reading the Geelong Advertiser, learned of an important royal wedding, that took place on April 26th at Westminster Abbey in London. The Duke of York, Prince Albert, married Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. Prince Albert was the second son and second in line to the throne, however, circumstances changed the line of succession. Referring to the marriage of Lady Elizabeth to his son it was reported:

"To mark the occasion of her marriage to the Duke of York, His Majesty the King has conferred on Lady Elizabeth the title of Princess. The scene at the Abbey was most impressive. The Prince of Wales (Prince Albert's older brother, Edward, and heir to the throne) wore military scarlet, the Duke of York was in the blue of his own service. At last came the bride and eight dainty maids, the two youngest bearing her train. Lady Elizabeth looked just a handful of winsomeness, her eyes alight and her cheeks flushed. It was small wonder that the Duke of York turned to cast a lover's look down the aisle as she entered."

Queen Elizabeth II was the product of that happy union and without that marriage we would not have had Elizabeth as Queen and her son, Charles, as our present king.

Winsomeness means: cheerful, light-hearted, - having a childlike charm.

Rumours of the separation of sexes at the Geelong High School resulted in a special meeting of parents. It was moved at the meeting:

'That this meeting of parents and guardians strongly protest against any alteration to the present constitution of the High School, and will disapprove of any move to divide the boys from the girls by placing them in different schools. This was seconded by Mr Turner. After several others had stated their views, the resolution was unanimously agreed to.'



Geelong High School C. 1925 Geelong Regional Library

A parent, Mr Moore, argued that in business, the presence of girls raised the tone of the office and it would be so in schools, too. He said:

"Boys and girls had to go through life together, and it was unnatural for them to be separated during their school days."

Mr Hill, the Principal, "...advised the meeting to take no notice of sectional interests, but to consider what was best for Geelong"

Physical culture class for girls were being organised, by the Blue Triangle Community Committee, for the forthcoming 'Girls' Week'.

"Physical culture has for many years been recognised as one of the most health giving forms of exercise, and yet it is surprising how seldom in this city (except among schoolchildren) classes are conducted. Church Guilds have undertaken physical culture as part of their club programme...."

Contests in physical culture squads are to be one of the features of the forthcoming Girls' Week, so it is likely that there will be an impetus given to this form of exercise for girls."

Fire was noticed, late on Saturday afternoon, by patrons attending a football match at Geelong Oval in Eastern Park. A motor car-load of patrons observed smoke emanating from the long, dry grass near the old swamp. It was assumed that a cigarette but may have been the cause.

"The car-load, which included one of the vice presidents of the football club, was driven rapidly to the spot and all hands soon had branches from the trees and set vigorously to beat out the flames which appeared to be gaining ground. The workers were determined, and with a lull of the wind after a hard fight, extinguished what might have been a serious outbreak. Smokers need to be careful when passing through the park whilst there is so much dry grass about."

Howard Carter and Lord Carnarvon's discovery of King Tutankhamun's tomb was of great interest to Geelong citizens, just as it was in almost every country. Local citizens were advised of a film to be shown at the Geelong Theatre.

"The film depicts the amazing collection of relics which were recovered from the ancient chambers, and was taken with the co-operation of the Egyptian Government"

References

1 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eight-hour_day

21 <https://www.onlymelbourne.com.au/labour-day-melbourne-history>

3 <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/publications/research-papers/download/36-research-papers/13812-heritage-note-no-1-2017-the-origins-of-the-eight-hour-day-in-victoria>