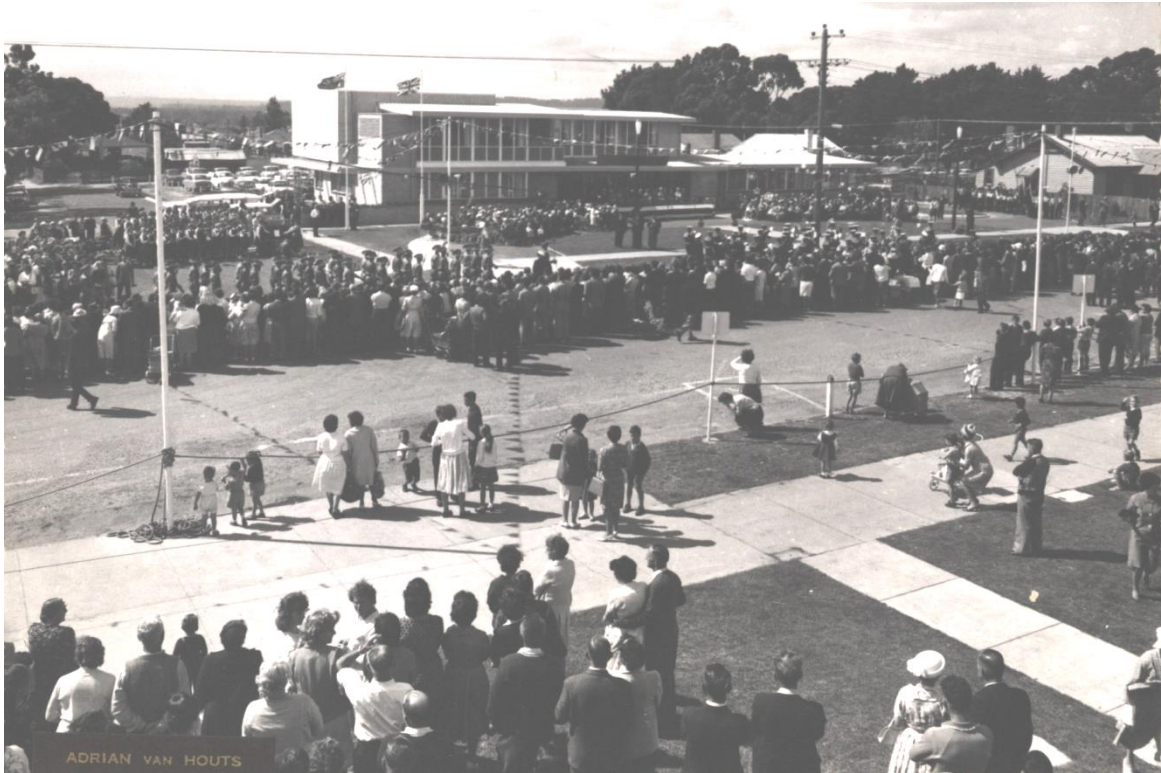


THE MOE CITY STORY



March 6th 2013 marks the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of the City of Moe. *It also marks the 135th year since the township of Moe was surveyed by Lardner and the first blocks of land sold. This article relates details of the lead up to the declaration of Moe as a city and the events of the day itself.*

Moe became a Borough in 1955 as the result of a vote by the Moe Newborough rate payers. John Adams explained the path to Borough status in 'So Tall the Trees'. In 1952 the Shire of Narracan was considering a substantial loan to carry out works in the Moe area. There was opposition to the loan from Councilors in other ridings as they believed the whole Shire should benefit from the loan. The loan was finally approved but the problem of meeting the needs of the rapidly growing township of Moe, by then the largest urban centre in the Shire, didn't go away. As Hec Stoddart pointed out, the Moe Newborough area was providing more than half the rate income of the Shire. However, the Shire was not prepared to discuss the idea of separation to create a Borough at that stage. But in 1952 the Progress Associations in Moe and Newborough organised to put up candidates in favour of a Borough at the next election. Although not all candidates were successful, the new Council agreed to a petition by the ratepayers of Moe and Newborough in November 1953 to call for a referendum and this went to the Minister in March 1954. The Minister approved the move and the referendum was carried out on August 28th 1954.

In the Narracan Shire Advocate of Friday May 28th 1954, the paper argued strongly for a 'yes' vote in the referendum. They were beginning the campaign months ahead of the poll date.

Headlined 'THIS MOE BOROUGH BUSINESS, A Project That Must Not Fail!', the article went on to give reasons why the citizens of Moe must vote in favour.

Firstly it was seen as a natural progression for the town - "in much the same way that the schoolboy in knickers must gravitate to the long pants category as he grows up." Confidently the editor states that "Moe is certainly growing up rapidly; and probably within another ten years become the leading city of Gippsland." He then challenges the voters - "...who now would desire to withhold Borough status and so hamper the gathering wave of progress." He dismisses opposition as mostly the "whispering variety" and from some sectional, some parochial areas or merely the fear of any change.

The next argument is that "A quiet consideration should convince taxpayers that the expenditure of their rates within their own limited area, by their own elected councillors would readily result in a considerable saving, apart from such as an important consideration as the closer supervision that would automatically follow."

The last argument given is that in a Shire, the home base of the Council tends to receive more attention. Examples of Morwell and Warragul are given, pointing out that they are also the main townships in their shire. "...Trafalgar reflects the same attentions, in degree, as those boasted of by Warragul and Morwell. Naturally so, for Trafalgar is our Shire centre, possibly just as naturally in spite of a rapid growth, Moe has for years carried the municipal rags and tatters of a cinderella."

It ends with the question - "Was ever the duty of townspeople so ethically clear, so logically correct."

The vote was clearly in favour with 2329 in favour and 261 against (39 informal votes) and in 1955 Moe became a Borough. The Narracan Shire acted on behalf of the Borough Council until all the arrangements were put in place for the changeover. The new Borough Council met for the first time in the Moe Mechanics Institute on September 14th 1955.

A house in George Street was rented from the Commonwealth Bank to act as the Borough offices.

To become a city the citizens of a municipality had to successfully petition the government to achieve this status and have rate revenue of not less than £30,000. Eight years later, having continued to grow, Moe was able to meet these requirements and the City of Moe was proclaimed on March 6th 1963. The papers were signed by the Governor in Council on the 11th of January that year. The Advocate of March 13th 1963 reported that city status was considered a great achievement. In his speech at the opening, the Lt Governor, Sir Edmund Herring, remarked that Moe's greatest achievement was the building of a community of old and new inhabitants. "Building a new community was always a 'tough' task but particularly so when the people came not only from other parts of Australia and from England, but from the Continent of Europe - people who spoke a different language and who had come from a different background and a different culture."

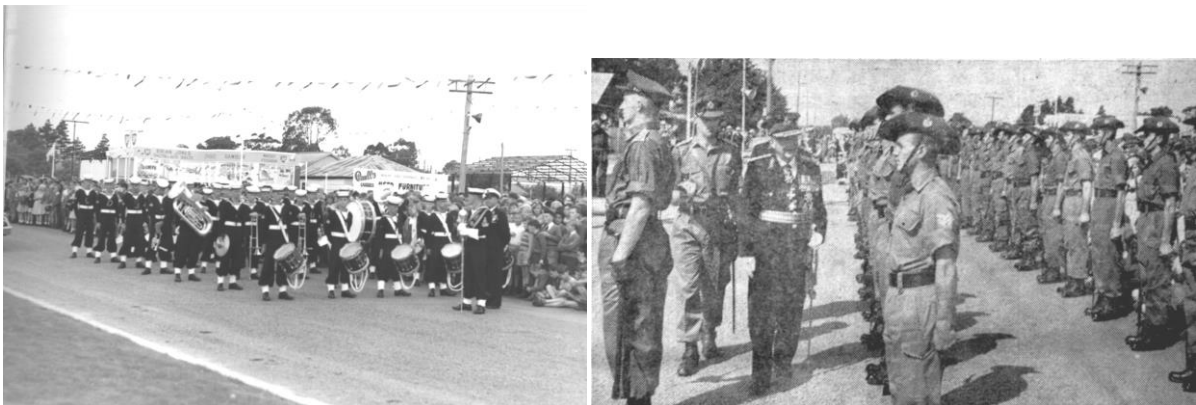


The arrival of the Lt Governor was heralded by a fanfare of the band of HMAS Cerberus. A member of the Boy Scouts opened the door of the vice regal vehicle, which was escorted by two Melbourne motor cycle policeman. Then the Lt Governor inspected the Air League Cadets escorted by the president of the Moe RSL, Mr Jack Maxwell, and the boys leader First Officer Eric Lyne and then the Guard of Honour provided by the 38th Field Squadron of the Royal Australian Engineers under the command of Captain T R Davey. Dame Mary Herring was greeted by eight year old Helen Coto who handed Dame Mary a big bouquet of flowers. Dame Mary then met with some of the women of Moe, including members of the Ladies Auxiliary of the RSL. She also met some the Girl Guides of the City.

The Moe High School choir attended the ceremony and sang 'Land of Mine' under the guidance of Stuart MacLean.

Following the official declaration, 500 pigeons were released and considered to be a 'majestic sight'. The Lt Governor moved into the building and unveiled the plaque commemorating the day and then the first meeting of the City Council was held.

The event was supported by school children who were brought to Albert St for the event and local citizens. The Advocate estimated the crowd in Albert Street at 8000 people.



Left: Band of HMAS Cerberus in Albert Street.

Right: Inspecting the 38th Field Squadron of the Royal Australian Engineers.



Inspecting the Air League Cadets



Dame Mary meeting ladies of the Moe RSL Auxiliary.



Moe High School Choir under the direction of Stuart MacLean.



Sir Edmund Herring making the formal proclamation.



Sir Edmund unveiling the plaque inside the new municipal offices.

The first days of March 1963 were marked by a number of events, many of which would have been organised to coincide with the proclamation.

- There was the formal declaration, held in the foreground of the municipal offices in Albert Street on the Wednesday.
- There was the completion of the new municipal building itself where the Lt Governor unveiled a plaque to commemorate the Declaration. The foundation stone had been laid in August of 1962.
- There was the donation by Claude and Margaret Staff of a gold mayoral chain to the City. This was a 'Magnificent Gesture' as the Advocate reported. On the back of the chain was the inscription "This chain was presented by Cr C S Staff, JP, Mayor of the Borough of Moe, 1960-61 and Mrs Staff, on the occasion of the proclamation of the City, March 1963." "The chain has a number of small gold plates, each inscribed with the name of a Mayor of Moe and each Mayor elected will add to it."
- The Friday of that week was declared a public holiday for the children of local schools. This was welcomed by all except those that attended the Yallourn Technical School in Newborough. The Technical School administration was in Yallourn, which was part of the Traralgon inspectorate so the students were not included. Had Traralgon been made a city, they would have had a holiday, said the Principal, Mr George Lynch.
- At St Andrew's Presbyterian Church 170 people attended the unveiling of the foundation stone of the new church being built in Fowler Street.
- The Scout Hall of the 1st Moe Scouts was officially opened on March 2nd by Mr R W McKellar, Deputy Chief Commissioner for Scouting in Victoria.
- 700 people packed the Civic Theatre for a service of thanksgiving and dedication for the new City. It was to be held at the Racecourse Reserve but rain caused a last minute change of plans.
- Moe Sports Club organised a sports carnival which was held in Vale St on the Saturday with cycling, wood chops, tug-o-war and dog parade with 1500 spectators. Highland dancing was also on display. The Victoria Police Band played several numbers. It was officially opened by the Mayor of Moe, Cr E Scott and Mr Jim Balfour, MLA.

- On the Sunday at Vale St there was the marching girls competition for the Latrobe Valley. Marching girls were so popular Moe even had an under 9 age group - the Mini-minors.
- The Nyalinga Festival took place during the first week of March with a street parade and various other events. A House of Friendship was set up as part of the Nyalinga Festival and over 200 former residents signed the book there. The Festival ended with street dancing in Albert Street. Colourful demonstrations of Polish and Ukrainian dancing were presented by the respective communities. It was followed by square dancing, rock-n-rolling and splendid solo dance by a Polish girl.
- Socially there was the first Mayoral Ball at Shaw's Ballroom. The Mayor and Mayoress took their seats after passing through a guard of honour formed by a team of dancers brought from Melbourne by Mr Merv Burrage. The team subsequently gave a dance exhibition - the dance being called A Bouquet of Waltzes. Bill Collins acted as MC. Bill had also; entertained the crowd while they waited for the arrival of the Lt Governor, three times tricking the crowd into thinking he had arrived before he actually did arrive.
- Since the Mayor couldn't invite everyone to the ball Tim Wilson and Peter Ives organised a BBQ at the old Borough offices where residents and old timers returning to Moe for the event could meet and talk, sing and recite and renew acquaintances.

What The Ladies Wore

In the newspaper fashion of the time, the Advocate reported on the dresses worn by the ladies.

Mrs Scott chose for the occasion a teal blue satin dress, sleeveless, with pearly trimmings worn with a fur stole.

Mrs Bartlett was in grey green French crepe with a beaded neckline and cap sleeves,. She, too, had a fur stole.

Mrs Fraser's frock was of brown silk overlaid with guipure lace panels. Her stole was of mink.

Mrs Stoddart wore black organza beaded in crystals and diamante, with elbow length dark red gloves.

Miss Claire Stoddart chose yellow organza embroidered in a floral pattern, with a white fur stole.

Mrs C S Staff's frock was of silver and white tinsel nylon over royal blue satin.

Mrs G S Considine was in royal blue brocade embellished with sequins.

Mrs Tom Jenkins frock of cerise satin had a square neckline, broad shoulder straps and pleats at each side of the skirt topped with a bow.

Mrs G McArthur chose black tulle over taffeta.

Mrs Mouritz wore the palest of ice blue, embossed in silver, with a blue chiffon drape at each side and a stole of Chinese mink.

Mrs Boon's brocade was blue green, with beaded ornamentation at the front of the pleated bodice and she wore a fur jacket.

Mrs Gregory's dress of aqua chiffon over taffeta also had a beaded bodice and was teamed with a white fur stole.

Mandarin sleeves were a feature of Mrs Griffin's royal blue satin frock.

Mrs McHardy was in pale blue satin brocade with a royal purple velvet collar.

Mrs Shaw's gown was of red chiffon with a pleated top and a trailing panel from the shoulder.

Mrs White's dress of midnight blue Thai silk had a panel of horizontal pleats down the front and grey flowers appliqué above the waist.

The Advocate of March 6th included a special feature on the City with an aerial photograph of the Moe in the 1960's with one from 1936 as a comparison. It was a very proud moment for the paper and the town. The editor wrote that, "The Advocate like every other resident of the new City of Moe, believes this is the most important day in the history so far of Moe and Newborough." A series of articles followed that highlighted the history of the town and featuring some of the events that took place such as the presentation of formal robes for the Mayor and Town Clerk from the Moe and Newborough Chambers of Commerce.

Moe was now a City and confidently looking to the future.



Moe City float in Nyalinga Festival Street Parade 1963

Some of the photos in this article are courtesy of the LV Express. These were Scanned from the newspaper: hence the image quality.