**The journey to establishing the**

**MONTROSE and DISTRICT MEN’S SHED.**

In 2012, the Rotary club of Montrose had a promotional stand at the Montrose Community Craft Market. The Rotary Club were looking for new members. Max Lamb a resident of Montrose decided to join the Montrose Rotary Club.

One of the projects the Rotary Club were interested in, was to establish a Men’s Shed. The idea came from a “Bloke’s night forum for men”, that had recently been hosted by the Montrose Football Club.

At the time, Croydon Men’s Shed were looking for new premises. They had been given notice that their tenancy of their home, which at the time, was located at the Monkami complex in Dorset Road, Croydon would be coming to an end.

The Kilsyth Scouts had folded up and their hall sat vacant.

Rotary had the idea of forming a relationship with the Croydon Shed and try to obtain the Kilsyth Scout Hall for a Mens Shed. Rotary gave Max Lamb the responsibly of working with the Croydon Shed to establish a joint Croydon-Montrose shed.

Unfortunately, the Yarra Ranges council had already had made the decision to demolish the building to make way for the new Japara complex. However, the Council did put the decision on hold while we made our case for it to be retained for the Men’s Shed. The building was not on the footprint area of the new complex and therefore wasn’t necessary for it to be demolished to make way for the new building. After several months, the council decided to go ahead and demolish the building.

As Croydon is in the Maroondah Council area and Montrose is in the Yarra Ranges Council area, Max decided it would be better to avoid conflict of interest between the two councils and have a separate Men’s Shed from that of Croydon’s.

A public meeting in Montrose was held to gauge the level of support. It was well attended.

One woman whose husband had recently retired, spoke up.

***‘I married my husband to have dinner with him, I married him to sleep with, I married him to have breakfast with, but I did not marry him to have lunch with him every day of the week “***

It was apparent that it was preferred for him and also with many other men to have an interest outside of the home.

The meeting supported the idea of the formation of The Montrose Men’s Shed.

To become a legal registered identity, a committee with a minimum of 4, an ABN and a constitution was required. So, a committee was formed. Richard Fennel as Treasurer, Robbert (correct spelling) Kop as Secretary, Harald Helmer as Vice President, Max Lamb as President and Geoff Brown as a Committee member. We joined the Australian Men’s Shed Association who provided the constitution and guidelines for governance. The name of Montrose and District Men’s Shed Incorporated was registered and an ABN granted on the 20-09-2013. A bank account was opened with the Bendigo Bank with a donation of a $1000 from Rotary.

The council offered the building that was the original Montrose Fire Station building to us (our current building) It had been used in recent times by the St John Ambulance as storage. It was in a poor and dirty state with grass growing up between the floor and the walls, the roof need replacing, there was no toilet or kitchen. The front doors had rot along the bottom.

The council agreed to replace the roof and doors, but at first, were not willing to install a toilet, they expected us to use the ones in the public hall.

The President attended a Council meeting, pointing out it was impracticable for elderly men with prostate problems to frequently interrupt the children’s dance class and other users of the hall to use the toilets.

The council got the point and agreed to install a toilet and an HWS.

Local accountant Ken Dowling, at the time, was the trustee for a charitable fund. He decided to donate a substantial sum of money from the fund to the Montrose Men’s Shed account. As a result of this money, we were able to purchase the required equipment, tools and is the reason why we remain in a heathy financial situation today.

Member Geoff Brown took charge of directing renovations of the interior of the shed to the condition it is today. Cabinet maker, Gary Brown of Top Class Kitchens, donated the kitchen. The Bendigo Bank also made a contribution to our bank account.

Unfortunately, Ken Dowling passed away before we had our official opening in 2014. Ken Dowling’s widow Christine, attended and was able to see what Ken’s donation from the trust account had done for the shed.

It wasn’t long before it was realised that more storage space was needed. A garden shed was installed where the garage shed is today. As we grew in numbers, somewhere to keep timber was needed. Fortunately, the owner of the land next door allowed us to put a container at the back of the property in return for mowing the grass.

There used to be an unused laneway behind the shed, probably for the night cart to service to properties a 100 years ago. The council added that land to our lease. This enabled the garden shed to be relocated behind the shed which in turn allowed room for the garage to be built in its place.

Since our beginning, there have been four presidents, Max Lamb, Reg Wright, Lee Kirkby (all serving 3 years) and the current president, Darryl Couch, who is in his second year.

Our members have been busy on a range of items such as making items to sell at the market, Community projects such as, nesting boxes for wildlife, garden boxes, initiated the repainting the names on the war memorial that had faded over the years and the current project of establishing a memorial garden to nurses that served overseas in war time.

During the COVID period our membership suffered from a healthy 45 members to today’s number of 31.

Author: Max Lamb, Life Member and Inaugural President of The Montrose and District Men’s Shed Inc.

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