



THE PORT MELBOURNE SETTLEMENT AND SCOUTING IN PORT MELBOURNE

Service to Underprivileged Youth



Scouting returning for a brief period at Port Melbourne in 2017. Despite enthusiastic leaders and youth members, the Group was unable to find a permanent home to meet on a regular basis. The lack of a formal meeting and storage space became problematic, and the Group was fortunate to relocate to the refurbished Scout Hall at Albert Park in 2024.

At one time there were three Scout troops in Port Melbourne (1st, 2nd and 3rd). Scouting in Port Melbourne ceased around 1990 with the closure of 1st Port Melbourne Group.

Scouting was an intrinsic part of the Port Melbourne history from the early days of Scouting. During the Great Depression from 1929 to 1935, many men were unemployed due to stevedoring strikes that crippled the maritime industries and left many families destitute.

3rd Port Melbourne became the home of the *Port Melbourne Settlement* under the guidance of Scouter, Graham Taylor. The Settlement established a support operation in a small cottage in Nott Street Port Melbourne and initially 15 Scouts and Cubs were recruited from local impoverished families as part of the Group.

The idea of a social support concept came from Roland House in London. Roland Phillips was a young Captain in the British Army who was involved in early Scouting and was a good friend of Baden-Powell. He wrote a range of Scout books on the Patrol System, The Tenderfoot Tests and The Scout Law. After he was tragically killed in the First World War, a trust was established to provide premises and temporary housing, clothing and food to assist the impoverished boys in East London.

The Settlement was a drop-in centre where 'Settlers' boys (whether they were Scouts or not) could participate in a range of activities - games and craft, a library and lounge, which was later expanded into an adjacent property to offer hot showers, assistance with food, clothing and hot soup and mugs of coffee. As others joined, they grew vegetables and flowers, made goods in a workshop in one room to sell and made and distributed soup and did cleaning and washing. Old clothes were also collected by the Scouts and distributed amongst the poor in the area.

The attendance for 1933 was listed as 7,602. In 1935, funds of over 3000 shillings were raised from over 50 Troops, Local Associations, Crews and Packs. Over 100 needy boys and their families benefited from the generosity of affluent Groups in Camberwell, Caulfield, Hawthorn, Kew, Malvern and country Groups. Donations were also received from local businesses and the Rotary Club of Melbourne who provided guidance in organisation and management of funds. An annual review concert, "Broadcast" provided additional funding support and also involved youth members in the production. They even produced their own newsletter – *The Settler*.

The Settlement also raised funds to take boys on a holiday camp to Gilwell Park at Gembrook and supported some Scouts in the Troop to the Frankston Jamboree in 1934/45, the first Jamboree to be held in Australia.

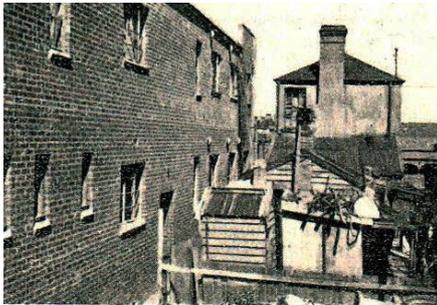
With the Settlement's support, many boys were assisted in gaining employment and older boys continued their involvement to support the younger members and activities. This sounds much like the role of today's Youth Helpers and Rovers giving back support to younger Sections.

The Settlement continued to offer its services into the early 1940s, when with the improvement of living conditions, its services and support were not as relevant to the local community. The YMCA took over the premises as a youth centre and this operation continued spasmodically until the early 1990s when the building was returned to the Boys Scouts after a lengthy conflict for legal ownership. It was sold in 1995 and now is a private residence.

The Port Melbourne Settlement was an inspirational example of Victorian Scouting's early involvement and a positive experiment in social support and service to youth and the community.

Sources:

- Victorian Scout Magazine
- Those Boy Scouts – Milne and Heward - 1987
- 'And to do a Good Turn to Someone Every Day' – Honours Thesis – John E Ford – 1998
- Scout Heritage Victoria Archives
- National Library of Australia – Trove
- Port Melbourne Historical Society (Membership Card & members photo)



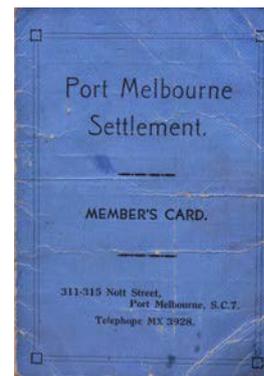
Rear view of the original Settlement with the new building on the left in Nott Street.



A young Settler and his stew



Port Melbourne Settlement members – circa 1937



Membership Card - 1934

Peter Datson – Scout Heritage Victoria
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