

1890 - 2010

# SEA BREEZES



NOVEMBER, 1928.

Cottage by the Sea Commemorative Keepsake

# Introduction

For over 120 years the mission of Cottage by the Sea has been to help children and families in need (whether convalescing children, children affected by war, fire, famine, flood or in need). The lifeblood of the Cottage has always been its community of dedicated people whose unerring commitment, through good times and bad, has helped it endure and grow to meet increased demands.

Cottage by the Sea is a not-for-profit, self-funded children's charity that today receives no government funding, relying entirely upon the generous support of its donors, branches, volunteers, business and community groups, trusts and foundations.



# In the Beginning



1885. The Countess of Meath (below left) founded the Ministering Children's League in Surrey, England, fundamentally to give children an opportunity to serve other children less happily situated in life by remembering that all who are in need have a claim upon them. The movement soon spread through Europe, America, Africa and Asia.

1889. The Countess of Meath travelled to Australia by ship. On board she met Elizabeth Calder (below centre) of Maldon and Annie Hitchcock (below right) of Geelong and inspired them to form a League in Victoria.



## 1890 - 1900



The original Cottage was opened by  
**LADY BRASSEY**  
7th December 1895  
President: Mrs R Harper

1890. Elizabeth and Annie formed a Ministering Children's League (MCL) in Victoria. Early days of the MCL involved tireless fundraising and travelling throughout Victoria and also interstate, to encourage the formation of branches.

1895. The original 11 room Cottage, designed by architect, Beverley Ussher of Melbourne (State Library, the Exhibition Building, Ormond College and Rippon Lea) and built by J C Taylor of Geelong, was of timber construction. The land, fencing and building cost £1,212. It was officially opened by Lady Brassey in 1895, a flag raising ceremony marked its inauguration.

1897. The wash house was moved down the yard next to the wood house.

Initially the Cottage provided care for twelve 'convalescing and delicate' children at a time 'to enjoy a seaside recovery'.



## 1900 - 1910

1900s. Children were sent to the Cottage to convalesce from typhoid fever, rheumatic fever, diphtheria, pneumonia, spinal disease and hip disease.

1901. HRH The Duchess of Cornwall and York, Patron of the League, visited.

1904. To save money and provide nourishing food to improve the health of the children, a cow was procured to ensure a regular supply of fresh milk.

*"The cow has been a great boon to us for this year, the new milk is so good for the sick and weakly ones."*

1905. First President, Mrs Robert Harper from Toorak, visited the Cottage. Photo right shows her receiving flowers from some of the earliest and youngest children.

1906. Matron was paid a wage of £80 per annum and a full time nurse £45 per annum.

1909. Elizabeth Calder succumbed to a bout of pneumonia and died at her home in Maldon, aged 73. MCL raised funds for a memorial in Maldon church and her obituary described her as 'a friend of children'.

1910. The Countess of Meath visited the Cottage in Queenscliff.



## 1910 - 1920

1910s. Children usually came to the Cottage by boat and occasionally by train which terminated in Queenscliff. Once at the Cottage, Matron would send a postcard home saying the children had arrived safely.

Cottage staff had long realised that growing their own vegetables was impossible in the sandy soil. In 1915 milk had risen to 5 pence a quart and meat was so dear at 2 pence a pound that the children were fed rabbit 4 days a week. With the outbreak of war (WWI), bread had risen to 7½ pence a 4lb loaf and butter was used very sparingly and supplemented by honey and treacle.

The Cottage could not manage on just their own fowls and ducks. Donations of eggs from Warragul and Dandenong were gratefully received and preserved with a covering of Ova.

1910. Infectious diseases were a constant worry, especially measles.

1912. The Calder Memorial Wing was built - a small 4 bed ward, a nurse's room and much needed presses for the children's clothes and baskets for the house linen. The cost was £300.

1916. Matron reported '326 children had passed through the Cottage - a record so far for any year'.

1917. On 27th February, Annie Hitchcock, prominent philanthropist and community worker, died.

1918. On 4th November, the Countess of Meath died. On 14th November, Cottage children participated in Peace Celebrations in the Park (marking the end of WWI). The Wakanyana Pt Lonsdale Cottage by the Sea Appeal Committee was established.

1919. The Queenscliff Council requested the Cottage be made available for any patients of the influenza epidemic. The Calder Wing was kept empty as an emergency ward and no more children were sent until authorities felt it was safe.



View from rear of Cottage c1911

## 1920 - 1930

1920. The League's bank balance was £501/9s/11d. At the invitation of the Mayor of Queenscliff, the children and staff went to Geelong on a special train to see the Prince of Wales. The Cottage received £99/11s/11d from the Victorian Railways Dramatic Society's production of *Sowing the Wind* at the Playhouse on 3rd September 1920.

1921 - 1953. *Sea Breezes* newsletter published. 16,000 copies were distributed in 1922.

1924. Electricity was connected to the Cottage at a cost of £56/5s/0d for 30 overhead lights.

1929. Santa visited the children at the Cottage (below left).

'Please do not forget about "Hair-combings." Most people lose a good deal in the fall of the year, so that could be saved. Any sent either for the "Cottage" or "Sea Breezes" fund will be most acceptable. Grey hair is very valuable.'  
Sea Breezes (May 1921)



A Quarterly Magazine of Notes from the Ministering Children's League.  
"COTTAGE BY THE SEA," Queenscliff, Victoria.  
FOR WEAK AND DELICATE CHILDREN.



NURSE POPE.

## 1930 - 1940

'Girls must be over 4 and under 16; boys must be over 4 and under 9.'

1930. Government bonds were purchased through the Endowment Investment Fund with interest used to help maintain the Cottage.

1933. The annual cost to run the Cottage was £1,897/7s/11d. Water reticulation and a hot water service system were installed and the sewerage system was completed (partly funded by branches).

1935. The Travellers' Aid Society provided invaluable assistance by meeting and assisting little ones travelling to and from country towns to the Cottage. Due to serious deterioration of the timber Cottage, a Building Appeal was launched to fund a replacement.

1936. The original timber Cottage was demolished and a new brick Cottage was designed by architect P. Scott-Williams, Collins St., Melbourne. The Building Appeal raised £10,000.

1937. Committee members and visitors travelled to Queenscliff on the *Weeroona* paddle steamer, picnicking in the Cottage grounds and inspecting the wards.



1938. The new Cottage, built by J C Taylor and Sons, Geelong, was officially opened by Lady Huntingfield.

1939. As a fundraising initiative the Cottage produced *Happy Children in your Home* which was advertised in *Sea Breezes* for 2/-. The new Cottage was only occupied for five months before the Defence Department took it over as a military hospital, displaying the Red Cross on the roof and sides of the building to alert enemy planes. Matron was given 24 hours to evacuate staff and children. In order for the League to continue its work, *Happy Days* - a large house in Black Rock - was rented so holidays could still be conducted for disadvantaged children.



This building was opened by  
LADY HUNTINGFIELD  
20th January 1938  
President - Mrs F Scarlett



## 1940 - 1950

1940s. 40 children attended at a time staying for 14 days, one month or longer if from the country. In 1941, children were required to stay for a month due to petrol rationing.

1940. The annual cost to run the facility was £4,612/7s/8d.

1942. With *Happy Days* not proving large enough, *The Lodge* at Sandringham was purchased and used as a boy's camp.

1943. The Defence Department returned the Cottage to MCL and after refurbishment, a Fair was held to celebrate its re-opening. A new AGA stove was installed. Camps were held at Queenscliff and also at Sandringham

(until its sale in 1953). Groups of 40, girls of every school age and boys from 5 to 7 years, stayed in Queenscliff. Groups of 20 boys, from 8 to 13 years, stayed in Sandringham.

1945. The camps during Summer of 1945 were reserved for children of POWs - selected by the AIF Women's Association.

*'At our temporary cottage, "Happy Days", Matron Caught began duties there in February, and was proving pleasingly competent in her work. Because of the need to make preparation in case of an air raid, Matron had enlisted the practical co-operation of local residents and of the Sandringham City Council, with the result of a large trench shelter in the garden at "Happy Days".' Sea Breezes (October 1942).*

Photos below (from left): Recovering soldiers at the Cottage; *Happy Days*, Black Rock; *The Lodge*, Sandringham; New AGA stove.



## 1950 - 1960

1950s. 'Children helping children' - just two examples: Collingwood Primary School provided Christmas puddings and Chilwell Primary School, Geelong, donated gifts for Cottage campers each year.

An old tram was donated by MMTB as a play house for the children and provided many hours of fun until its removal in the late 1990s.

Matron saved three children from a destitute family becoming Wards of the State by taking them in for several nights until the Salvation Army could find accommodation for them.

1951. The children enjoyed listening to 'The Children's Hour' on the radio.

1956. The Calder Ward was rebuilt as a modern brick playroom attached to the Cottage.

1959. The children were allowed to watch TV on a superseded model costing £95 (which retailed new for £193).

Extract from a letter sent to Matron from a 9 year old Greek girl who had attended:

*'I am riting a letter to see how you are going, if you a oright. And if you want to know how I am going. I catte all my meals like I was at the Cottage by the Sea. And my sister she is oright. And I think we will come this year too. I love to see the Cottage again. I love to go to the beach all days and down the big sandpit and little sandpit around near there. I love to play at the back year and I love the little dog and the big one which I forget its name.'*



## 1960 - 1970

1960s. 'Blasting of the Rip channel again caused cracks in the wall of the Cottage and caused the picture of the Queen to fall off the wall with the Ports Harbour Authority refusing to pay for damages and MCL footing the bill again.' During this decade Cottage by the Sea moved its administrative office from 281 Collins Street, Melbourne to 1st Floor, 694 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn, 3122.

The MCL Executive decided to print and sell Christmas cards as a form of fundraising.

During the 1960s there was an increasingly large proportion of migrant children of every nationality, as well as indigenous children, holidaying at the Cottage. Matron always took great satisfaction in most children managing to gain more than 4 lbs in weight whilst at the Cottage for 3 weeks.

1961. The annual cost to run the Cottage was £19,640/19s/9d.

1964. The Executive decided to print letters to encourage donations from large firms.

1969. The annual cost to run the Cottage was \$27,659.00.



## 1970 - 1980

1970s. At each camp 40 children stayed for approximately one month. As well as beach activities, visits to the Fort, Lighthouse and Queenscliff Historical Society, the children also enjoyed catching the ferry to Sorrento for a day of swimming and rock pool rambling.



1972. It was decided that the President could not hold office for longer than 3 years.

1977. A State Government Grant was given to Cottage by the Sea.

1979. The older children visited the YMCA sporting complex. Father Christmas still visited the children, arriving in a Queenscliff Fire Brigade fire cart.



## 1980 - 1990

1980s. Table tennis, trampolining, cookery sessions, farm visits and gym sessions as well as computer studies were introduced during this decade. A new cooking range and dishwasher were installed as well as a new table tennis and pool table.

1980. The decision was made to construct the Activity Hut.

1982. The Marine Room was completed, featuring a marine tank for observing collected items from Swan Bay, as well as a tropical fish tank.

1984. Government funding (granted in 1977) ceased. This funding crisis compelled the Cottage to re-evaluate and improve its methods. Additional

fundraising and in-kind support from Branch members, service clubs and a generous public ensured the ongoing viability of the Cottage. People rallied behind the Cottage - badges were made with the motto "Give a kid a break" and sold for \$1.

1985. The annual cost to run the Cottage was \$178,388.00. The MCL was incorporated as the Ministering Children's League Inc.

1986. Variety Club of Australia, assisted by Retravision, presented the Cottage with a 14 seater 'Sunshine Bus'.

1987. A new three vehicle carport was built to house the new bus and two cars.

1989. New playground opened.



## 1990 - 2000

1990s. An award system was introduced to encourage children to co-operate positively in a group environment. More outdoor activities were included - horse riding, farm visits, mystery tours, ferry trips, bike riding and BBQ picnics. More creative indoor activities were also included - designing own t-shirts, disco nights, drama classes, cooking and choral singing. These activities provided the children with a greater degree of self-esteem and confidence.

1990. The Cottage was maintained by the Board and 8 branches. The Cottage Centenary Year was celebrated with a giant fair at Princess Park, Queenscliff and an official launch at a Gallery Luncheon by Lady Young, wife of the Chief Justice and Lieutenant Governor of Victoria.

1993. Reconstruction of the Cottage kitchen took place.

1995. The Ministering Children's League in England closed and made a generous donation of £10,000 to the Cottage.

1996. Restructure of Board functions, Cottage operations and the appointment of the first part time General Manager,

Paulin Walter, took place. The introduction of smaller camps for shorter periods of time were considered by staff and management to be more beneficial to families.

1997. The administration office moved from Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn to 818 Burke Road, Camberwell 3124.

1998. The name formally changed from Ministering Children's League Inc. to Cottage by the Sea, Queenscliff Inc. The annual cost to run the Cottage was \$532,495. Staff training became compulsory with all staff having a Level 2 First Aid certificate. Also some staff undertook Surf Life Saving qualifications. Building of fire escape stairs commenced and was completed in 1999.



# 2000 - 2010

2000s. During this decade volunteers at Queenscliff and Camberwell played an integral role assisting with general maintenance, gardening, driving, office administration and data base entry. During this time the Cottage appointed its first full time General Manager, Tony Featherston.

2000. Major renovations were undertaken to both children's bathrooms.

2003. Cathy Freeman, Olympic gold medallist, was appointed Cottage Patron.

2006. Purchase of the adjoining Riptide premises provided the flexibility to run simultaneous camps and respite for families, etc. New programs were introduced (Take a Break, REEF and Mentor) with children from Palm



2009. A three year Bushfire program was introduced, providing camps for children and families touched by the February 2009 Victorian bushfires.

## 2010 and Beyond

During 2009/10 many Cottage by the Sea stakeholders contributed information for the development of Master and Strategic Plans to help ensure the effective conduct of the charity going forward. The ultimate outcome was the creation of a Master Plan which identified the most effective use of Cottage by the Sea buildings, land and other resources for decades to come.

2010. Board President, Michael Randall, announced wonderful news - the Cottage was debt free and the Board of Management was well on the way to developing sustainable short and long-term financial strategies. During the 120 year celebrations, a time capsule was placed in the Cottage building to be opened at the 150th A.G.M in 2040. Commemorative paving was also laid around the flagpole, funded by donors and supporters.

2011. Following catastrophic flooding in Queensland and Victoria, a camp program was introduced (similar to the 2009 Bushfire program).

GIVING. New fundraising initiatives were introduced, aimed at Community, Personal and Workplace Giving.

COTTAGE FRIENDS. A new membership concept was introduced, informing supporters of Cottage news and events (either by mail or

electronically) through newsletters, calendar/annual reports, A.G.M. invitations and an annual afternoon tea & tour of the Cottage.

2008. An annual Cottage Celebrity Surf Day was launched, generating awareness and fundraising, but most importantly the opportunity for Cottage kids to meet celebrities such as Cathy Freeman, champion surfers and AFL footballers. A DVD of each camp was made and sent to each child. Olga Johnson left a bequest of \$450,000 which allowed the Cottage to clear the debt owing on the purchase of Riptide Cottage. A garden outside the back deck was created and dedicated to Olga.

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FUTURE FUNDRAISING STRATEGY. To maintain and expand our activities we also need to develop long term strategies to ensure we remain a viable and sustainable charitable operation. This is all the more important as we do not receive any Government funding. With this in mind we are currently in the process of setting up a Cottage by the Sea Foundation to help deal with future fundraising needs including sustainability issues, capital projects and bequest programs.

NATIONAL CAMPS. Dependent on interstate funding, the Cottage will offer camp programs for children in need throughout Australia.



## Cottage by the Sea® Queenscliff

...helping children and families in need since 1890

### Branch Contacts

BELLARINE  
Anthea Bromell Tel: (03) 5258 4644

GEE LONG  
Meg Chisholm Tel: (03) 5243 6329

QUEENSCLIFF  
Bev Davies Tel: (03) 5251 2520

YARRA  
Prue Forster Tel: (03) 9417 7369

HIGHTON CERES ACORN  
Ros Leigh Tel: (03) 5249 1380

### Queenscliff Contacts

29 Flinders Street, Queenscliff, VIC 3225  
Tel: (03) 5258 1663  
Fax: (03) 5258 4347  
Email: info@cottagebythesea.com  
www.cottagebythesea.com.au

### Camberwell Contacts

818 Burke Road, Camberwell, VIC 3124  
Tel: (03) 9813 0646  
Fax: (03) 9882 7159  
Email: cottagebythesea@bigpond.com

Please call (03) 9813 0646 or (03) 5258 1663 or visit [www.cottagebythesea.com.au](http://www.cottagebythesea.com.au) to donate, get involved or obtain information. Donations \$2.00 and over are tax deductible.