

Max Taylor Remembers.....

The Memorial Park and Playground.

Researched by the writer when he was a Shire of Kowree Councillor 1972 – 1975.

The present park was gazetted as a water reserve and park in 1926 and was placed under the control of the Shire of Kowree. The park also included a “well” which was sunk by the Chinese gold seekers many years earlier to the depth of approximately 50 feet and a width of approximately 4 feet and lined with red gum timber slabs for its entire depth. This “well” later had a windmill erected on top of it and a large tank stand and some large corrugated tanks alongside. There were two troughs on the roadside immediately in front of the flowering gum on the northern side of the park. There were also hitching rails at the troughs as well as across the road at the Post Office.

The Shire had their Apsley Depot in the corner where the toilets now stand. This was removed when the Apsley and District Progress Association and War Memorial Committee that was formed from the old Apsley Progress Association updated the park after the war. The land on which the park was gazetted was gifted, I believe by the Grizelle family who at the time owned the Apsley Hotel and I think old store. Mr W Gizelle often visited the town after the war and was related to the Simpson family by marriage.

The park had been planted with a number of pine trees in 1926 and the Progress Association removed these after the war. The park was officially named the Apsley and District War Memorial Park. At the same time, the World War Two monument was erected. This monument was made from granite from the Dergholm area. The troughs, windmill and tanks were removed at this time, as was a shed which housed the original Apsley Fire Brigade. This shed was where the toilets now stand.

After a few years the park again fell into a state of neglect until the newly formed Lions Club decided to smarten it up. The Lions Club was the force behind the revival of the park and with help from various other bodies including the Hotel Social Club, the Shire of Kowree and the Progress Association, it is now a popular place. It is still under the control of the Council.

The old “well” had a series of steel ladders and landings to the bottom, which enabled maintenance to be done on the pumping equipment. My grandfather, James Hunt, was the caretaker of the system as well as the street-lighter when I was a boy. There were a number of kerosene street lights dotted around the town and they were lit and extinguished every night.

The “well” was, as everyone thought, filled with sand and the couch grass then grew over it. A few years later Mr and Mrs Farrelly’s son, Chris, was playing in the park and Mr Ian Hamilton was walking home when he heard cries of help coming from under the ground. The boy had broken through the couch grass mat that had formed over the old well and had been caught by the first of the old landings. Mr Hamilton in his job as Shire Foreman promptly had the well filled again. (It was always my ambition to have the well partly reopened and a suitable fence similar to the Chinese Wells along the Coorong erected and a suitable historic marker put there. I can still give the location of the well).