

## ***THE SQUARE CENTRE, MELBOURNE***

The Square Centre first opened in Melbourne in November 1945 at South Melbourne. It was based on a youth centre in Edinburgh, Scotland, sponsored by the Girl Guides Association of Scotland for girls and boys aged 14-18 years.

The Centre was first run by Miss Mary Lambe, who later visited Scotland and worked with Miss Collyns in Edinburgh. Some of their early activities included hiking, table tennis, handcraft, puppetry, films, dancing, visits to other clubs such as Guide Companies, Scout Troops, YWCA/YMCA and sending food parcels to Scotland.

Initially this centre opened three nights a week with a total weekly number of between 60-70. Numbers were limited by the space available and each night they had to turn people away. A waiting list was formed as they had more than they could cope with, which proved the need for this project.

In 1947 a Guide Company associated with the Square Centre was opened for girls 11-16 years of age. This Company met directly after school and taught the unique principles of Guiding as well as outdoor activities and general living skills. The girls enjoyed the challenges of the Guide Badge system that gave them a sense of achievement.

Several years after it opened, the Centre moved to the Brotherhood of St. Laurence building situated at 67 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. This meeting area had more space and the facilities lent themselves to a broader program.

They also had access to the adjacent Elizabeth Hay Memorial Health Centre with its modern baths, general equipment, and clothes washing facilities. A nursing sister was in attendance continuously. This meant that the Square Centre was able to provide meals and bathing facilities for those who attended.

After the move to Fitzroy, the Centre was able to increase their numbers to over 100 children. The school children did their homework after school, some learnt dressmaking, paper maché work, modelling, craftwork and the boys learnt aero-modelling.

The senior girls took part in the YWCA Saturday afternoon basketball competitions and the boys took part in boxing and other forms of physical culture. The members had access to a library of over 500 books which were donated to the centre by friends and other organisations.

The girls from MacRobertson Girls' High School took the children on outings in the term holidays. The Brotherhood of St Laurence ran camps to Ocean Grove during the January School holidays and the 10-16 year old girls from the Square Centre were included. The Centre Leaders staffed these activities which showed the wonderful co-operation of all youth organisations of this era.

The Guides withdrew from the Square Centre in 1955-56 due to lack of Leaders. This wonderful project gave the young people of South Melbourne and Fitzroy many opportunities that they would not otherwise have had.

*From Guides Victoria Archives - Guiding Properties*

[51734\_Guiding\_Properties.pdf at < <http://www.guidesvic.org.au/home/content.asp?pageID=256>> 18 May 2009]