

History of The Basin

Chapter 6

Religious Organisations

**Created by Rick Coxhill
Last revised January 26, 2008**

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Summary

This chapter details development of the Religious Institutions in The Basin.

The Basin Presbyterian Church was founded in 1931. In 1935, a church building was opened on the corner of Church Street and Forest Road. In 1964, the church base was moved to Boronia and the land and building sold to the Scouting Association.

St. Mary's Church of England in The Basin was founded in 1933 and services initially held in the Glideaway. In 1939, a church building was opened on the corner of Wicks Road and Mountain Highway. In 1948, the building was moved to a new site in Mountain Highway. In the late 1980's the church suffered a decline in numbers and in 1991 the land and building was sold to Melbourne Vinayagar Hindu Sangam.

The Basin Methodist Church was built in 1903 in Liverpool Road on land now part of The Basin Primary School. Before then, services were held for over 15 years in the first The Basin Primary School in Doongalla Road. In 1958, the building was shifted to Boronia Road, Boronia where it became the Sunday School Hall of the Boronia Methodist Church.

The building of a Hindu Temple in The Basin was one of the most controversial issues that has confronted the local community. Numerous Council permit applications and re-applications, a petition, Town Planning Appeals, Tribunal Appeals and many long articles in the local press stalled the building until 1994 when the building was finally officially opened on land that once sited the St. Mary's Church of England building.

The Salvation Army Basin Centre is the longest established institution in The Basin. Established in 1897, in 2008 it is still in operation. Although the role of the Centre has changed over the years, it has provided support for the implementation of the philosophies of the Salvation Army.

The Basin YWCA Friendly Circle was formed in 1980 and utilised The Basin Progress Hall as its base. Unfortunately, the group closed in 1999.

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Basin Presbyterian Church

An early resident Mrs. Pickett felt the need for some form of divine worship and arranged for services to be held in The Basin Progress Hall in late 1930. On the 7 June 1931 The Basin Presbyterian Church was founded. Among early members were the Gretton family, Mrs. Stephens, Mrs. Henderson, Mrs. Gaunt, Mrs. Caughey and Rev. and Mrs. Roxburgh. Miss Cornwall began the Sunday School. In the early years the church was in the Boronia and Lysterfield charge. For some time services were held in The Basin Progress Hall, the preacher being Mr. McNaughton.

In 1933, a block of land on the corner of Church Street and Forest Road was purchased for 90 pounds and working bees were arranged to clear the land for building. Money was extremely scarce and even floors were scrubbed by Ladies Guild members to swell the funds. In 1934 a loan was granted by the Loan Fund Council and plans were drawn by the son of the interim moderator Rev. J. K. Robertson. Building commenced soon after loan approval. On 9 March 1935, the church was opened with a ceremony conducted by the Rev. R. W. Macaulay. It came as a surprise when the Mission Committee presented the church with an organ. In 1941 the lining and outside oiling was completed under Rev. Archer Harris.

The first missionary in the church was Mr. H. M. Bell who spent several years in the New Hebrides. Other members well remembered from the 40's were Mr. Heath, Mrs. Newstead, Mr. Houston and Mrs. Walker. In 1947 Mrs. Pickett gave the block next to the church for future use. In 1953 Messrs. E. Hill and D. Allen were appointed as elders and this meant the church was directly represented on the Session.

Over the years, organists included Miss Roxburgh, Miss Gray, Miss McKenzie, Mr. Heath, Mr. Cavill, Mr. Henley and Mrs. Spottiswood. In the 50's the church was under the Blackburn Session with the Rev. F. P. Strickland as the interim moderator. Activities included a Ladies Guild, a Sunday School, a P.G.A., a girls choir, prayer meetings and Bible study, and a weekly Social evening.

In 1964 it was felt that population trends warranted the moving of the church to St. David's in Boronia. Prior to this the Rev. W. Bligh conducted services at The Basin. In the same year,

the land and building was sold to the Scout Association to be used as the base for the 5th Knox Scout group.

St. Mary's Church of England.

On 6 July 1933 members from St. Paul's Boronia canvassed The Basin to ascertain if there were sufficient Church of England ladies to form a Guild. Consequently the first meeting of The Basin Guild was held on 18 July 1933. During August of the same year a petition, signed by over thirty people, was submitted to the Diocese of Melbourne requesting that Church of England services be conducted in The Basin.

The first service was in Mr. Cain's Hall (The Glideaway), The Basin on 9 November 1933. About thirty people were present. Services were held fortnightly, on Thursday evenings, as the Vicar was not available on Sundays.

In May 1934, Miss Wicks donated a block of land at the corner of Old Forest Road (now Wicks Road) and Mountain Highway, on which to build a church. After years of work by the Guild, the Church of St. Mary's was built on this site by a builder from Glen Waverley at a cost of 195 pounds. On Sunday, 2 December, 1939 the Church was dedicated by Archbishop Head and Rev. C. P. Brown of Ferntree Gully was the first vicar. It is reported that the congregation overflowed the Church on this memorable occasion.

In 1947, land in Mountain Highway was purchased and on 16 February 1948 the building was moved in sections to that site, by a horse and wagon. In 1955 two blocks of land adjacent to the Church on the west side were purchased to allow space for the erection of a proposed Church Hall.

During 1959 the old site of the Church, at the corner of Wicks Road and Mountain Highway was sold.

On 22 August 1963 the Vestry approved the erection of a brick veneer hall by the letting of sub-contracts. On Sunday, 26 April 1964, the Archdeacon of Kew, The Ven. J. Harvey-Brown, M. A., dedicated the hall which was filled to capacity. A tireless worker for the erection of the new hall was Mr. S. Bedford.

During the 1970's the Church experienced a growth in numbers and to accommodate this the Church was extended in October, 1975 and included a meeting hall. A loan was taken out to part finance the extension and the loan was paid out in October 1978.

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The years between 1970 and the middle 1980's were the "Golden years of St. Mary's". There was a strong community spirit with a caring church family led by Vicar Geoffrey Turner who was with St. Mary's for 12 years. Strong pastoral care was a feature led by vestry and congregational members. Care groups operated who supported sick church members or members who were disabled in other ways. Social gatherings were a feature of church life including family barbecues, presentation days, picnics and films. The Sunday School and bible classes thrived with numbers reaching 90. At one stage there were seven Sunday School teachers. All maintenance of the church and grounds was carried out by willing church members.

During the late 1980's there was a fall in numbers. As a consequence of this, and in an effort to rationalise and centralise resources, the Parish decided to close St. Mary's Church in 1989. The Diocese had the property on the market for a couple of years when in 1991 it was sold to Melbourne Vinayagar Hindu Sangam.

The Basin Methodist Church

The first Methodist Church services held in The Basin were in the first building of the Basin Primary School near Doongalla Road. In 1899 and 1900, when the school was temporarily closed due to lack of numbers, the Church had use of the building. Rev. Harrison conducted these services.

The Basin Methodist Church was built in 1903 in Liverpool Road, The Basin. It was located on land now part of The Basin Primary School - near the library.

After the establishment of the Methodist Church and The Salvation Army Homes various church functions were organised. Inter-church dinners were very popular and magic lantern slides shown at the dinners.

Thursday, May 7th: There is a meeting up at the school tonight about getting a church.

Thursday, May 28th: Mr. Green, Mr. Yeadon and Mr. Chandler called this afternoon. They were collecting money for a Church. There is a meeting at the school tonight to settle on a building site.



Methodist Church.jpg

Methodist Church built in 1903 on The Basin Primary School grounds in Liverpool Road. Circa 1940. Behind Church on left can be seen tennis courts (demolished in 1960). Behind Church on right is the School built in 1925 (not in view). The Church was moved to Boronia in 1958.

PHOTO: Courtesy Knox Historical Society

Community Support

A young Airman and his wife who lived in The Basin had a young baby with a heart defect. The only places that could perform the operation to repair the defect were in England or New Zealand. The community rallied and through the efforts of the local Federal member John Jess, arrangements were made for the RAAF to fly the mother and baby to Sydney. The American Air Force then flew them to New Zealand for the operation. The reverse procedure was used to transport them back to The Basin.

Monday, August 31st: The contractors started building the church last Wednesday.

Tuesday, September 15th: There was a Ladies meeting up at the school this afternoon to arrange about a tea meeting for the opening of the new Church.

Tuesday, October 6th: Practice of the Hymns up at the school in the evening for the opening of the new Church next Sunday.

Sunday, October 11th: The new Church was opened this morning. Mr. Judkins preached both morning and evening. He was very good. Every seat in the Church was as full as it would hold and some stood in the Porch. It was the same in the evening.

Tuesday, October 13th: The tea meeting held at the new Church was a great success, there were about three hundred people there. They made 15 pounds with the tea and collection. The Sunday collections made it up to 20 pounds.

Janet Dobson Diary

The Church continued in The Basin until 1958 when the building was shifted to Boronia Road, Boronia where it became the Sunday School Hall of the Boronia Methodist Church. The Education Department purchased the land left vacant by the removal of the Church and amalgamated it with the existing school land.

In 1967, the Sunday School Hall was re-located to Pine Crescent Boronia, now owned by the Wesleyan Methodist Church.

Hindu Temple

The building of a Hindu Temple in The Basin was one of the most controversial issues that has confronted the local community. The Temple was the subject of numerous Council permit applications and re-applications, a petition, Town Planning Appeals, Tribunal Appeals and many local articles in the local press. The end result of

all these processes was a Hindu Temple and conditions of use that are considered a reasonable compromise for the Hindu and local communities.

The Melbourne Vinayagar Hindu Sangam was formed in September 1989 by a group of Tamil Hindus of Vinayagar denomination. The main aim of the Sangam was to locate a suitable site in Eastern Melbourne, erect a temple to provide a place of worship and create a centre of attraction for cultural and religious activities. The Temple would be dedicated to Lord Ganesh, also called Vinayagar, the elephant-headed god worshipped by all Hindus around the world. Incorporated in the ceiling of the Temple would be a dome (Sikhama/Vimanam) that represents the shape of a mountain. Hindus generally believe that the seat of divinity is in the mountains and thus the whole Temple structure is likened to a mountain.

In Early 1990, the Sangam purchased the land and buildings in Mountain Highway that was the site of St. Mary's Church of England that had closed.

In July 1990, the Sangam applied to Knox Council for development of the site. The development proposal envisaged demolition of the existing buildings (a church and meeting hall), construction of an elaborate and ornate temple, two-storey building and outside toilets, and provision of car spaces. It was proposed that the Temple be used for two hour sessions each morning and evening with at most 15 persons present. On four occasions each year there would be special worship days where up to 120 persons could attend. There would be no funerals, marriages or baptisms at the Temple. Extensive advertising of the proposal attracted 6 objections.

Knox Council officers prepared a report recommending that the application be refused on the grounds of overdevelopment of the site, detriment to the local environment and adverse effects to the site and surrounding residents. The Sangam became aware that their proposal was not favoured by Council and requested that their application be deferred to allow a "scaled down" proposal to be formulated. Council deferred consideration of the application at the September meeting to allow the Sangam to address the report and objections.

This resulted in a revised application by the Sangam that envisaged removing the two-storey

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building and enlarging the temple but reducing its ornateness. Advertising of this revised plan attracted objections from two of the original objectors, 17 new objections and a petition signed by over 500 people. As a result of these latest objections, the Sangam again modified the Temple design to address some of the objections.

Knox Council officers recommended that this latest design be approved subject to six special conditions.

On 30 October 1990, this application was considered by Council. Cr. Dare proposed that the recommendation be adopted. Amendments to the permit conditions were put forward by Cr. Lupton, but these were lost. The recommendation was finally carried 9/1.

A number of local residents lodged two appeals with the Town Planning Appeals Tribunal against the decision to grant a permit. The grounds of one appeal were based on overdevelopment of the site, insufficient car parking, proposal is out of character with the area and effect on adjoining residential land. The second appeal grounds were based on hours of use.

Both appeals were held on 27 February 1991. In its lengthy determination issued on 22 April, the Tribunal did not consider that the proposed development would be an overdevelopment of the site. On the issue of car parking, the Sangam tendered evidence that they had made arrangements with both St. Bernadettes and The Basin Primary Schools for additional car spaces to be made available on the four annual days of special religious observance. With this arrangement, the Tribunal considered that there were sufficient car spaces allowed. The Tribunal did not consider that the proposal was out of character with the area, or that there would be adverse effect on adjoining residences, but suggested some changes to the permit conditions to soften the impact of the proposal on these issues. On the hours of use, the Tribunal agreed that the original permit wording be modified. The Tribunal therefore upheld the decision by Council to grant a permit subject to a number of changes to the permit conditions:

In accordance with the Tribunals decision, Council issued a new planning permit on 30 May 1991 with the relevant conditions listed below. Conditions 17, 18 and 19 were either modified or added from the original Council conditions at the direction of the Town Planning Appeals Tribunal.

14. No external sound amplification equipment shall be used for the purposes of announcements, broadcasts or similar.

16. Parking of church members' cars shall be restricted to the parking areas to be provided and no vehicle under the control of such persons shall be parked in nearby streets.

17. The building must not be used as a place of worship between 9.00 p.m. and 7.00 a.m. on any day.

18. Except for the four annual days of special religious observance, the daily hours of congregational services must be between 7.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. and 6.00 a.m. and 8.00 p.m. on any day unless with the prior written approval of the Responsible Authority.

19. A 2 metre acoustic fence to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority shall be constructed at the applicant's expense along the west boundary of the site.

The Sangam held a special ground breaking ceremony on 14 September 1991 and construction of the Temple officially began. A team of 6 specialists were imported from India on six month visas to build the Temple.

The original church was demolished to clear the land for the building of the Temple but the meeting hall was not demolished (the original permit conditions were that the meeting hall was to be demolished to allow for the proposed car spaces).

In February 1992, inspections by Council revealed that the meeting hall was being used for residential purposes for the Temple builders but this ceased in March.

Whilst the Temple was being constructed, the land and residence at 2 Conyers Street at the rear of the Temple site was purchased by members of the Hindu Community. The intention was to use the house at 2 Conyers Street as a residence for the priest in charge of the Temple.

Between the Temple site and No 2 Conyers St., is an unmade right-of-way that runs behind other residential properties and has entrances from Forest Road and Conyers Street. Council resolved in December 1991 to close the right-of-way behind the residential properties and sell the land to adjoining land owners. Thus the land at 2 Conyers Street and the Temple site would be connected and for all practical purposes under control of the one body.

Lt. Col. Jas. Bray

The "Bray Memorial Home for Pensioners" in A'Beckett St., Melbourne is named after the first superintendent of the Boys' Home, Lt. Col. Jas. Bray. An authority in his time on crime and juvenile delinquency, he served with distinction for seven years at The Basin.

In September 1992, the Sangam applied to Council with a proposal to retain the meeting hall, relocate the car park and use the residence at 2 Conyers Street for a Manse (residence for a priest). It was proposed that the meeting hall be used for activities such as committee meetings, small gatherings and religious education. A car park would be provided at the rear of 2 Conyers Street, and ingress/egress to the car park would be on either side of the meeting hall from Mountain Highway. If the right-of-way from the rear of 2 Conyers Street into Forest Road was properly constructed, the Sangam proposed that this be used as the car park egress instead of Mountain Highway.

Whilst Council was considering the Sangams latest proposal, the Temple was completed and on the weekend of 10 & 11 October a consecration ceremony for the Temple took place attracting large numbers of devotees from Victoria and interstate. Among the dignitaries who attended the opening were Knox Mayor, Cr. Colin Tidball and the Federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, Mr. Crean, who represented Prime Minister Keating. Many members of the local community also attended.

Advertising of Sangams latest proposal attracted 8 objections. Knox Council officers prepared a report recommending that the application be approved subject to 26 conditions. In particular, that Forest Road be the egress from the car park.

Council considered this recommendation in December 1992. Cr. Dempster recommended that the application be refused on the following grounds:

1. The proposed uses are not appropriate to the location and incompatible with surrounding development.
2. The proposed uses would result in an undesirable intrusion into an established residential area.
3. The proposed uses are not in keeping

with the character of the area and adversely affect the amenity of the area.

Cr. Dempster argued that allowing the old meeting hall to stay would breach the original agreement with the Hindu community for the building to be demolished for on-site car parking. He also took note of numerous residents complaints about car parking since the Temple had opened. The Hindu community had not abided with its agreement to not park on road reserves and nearby streets. Cr. Dempsters recommendation that the application be refused was carried 8/3.

The Sangam lodged an appeal with Town Planning Appeals Tribunal against the Council refusal to grant a permit. This appeal was heard on 16 and 29 March 1993. A number of local residents appeared supporting the Councils decision and provided video and written evidence of the Sangams inability to abide by the original Council permit conditions on hours of use and car parking.

The Tribunal handed down its decision on May 21 1993 determining that the appeal by the Sangam be disallowed and no permit for its latest proposal be issued. The Tribunal found problems in considering the application when the proposed development was spread over three separately owned parcels of land. Car parking was inadequate and poorly located and the proposed development was an over-development of the site.

By early 1994, the Sangam had completed all the requirements of the original permit conditions. The old meeting hall had been demolished, car spaces provided and the site landscaped. In this year the Temple was officially opened.

In March 1999, the temple and an adjoining house were set fire under suspicious circumstances. Nobody was injured and damage was not extensive.

The Salvation Army Basin Centre.

The longest established institution in our community are the buildings once known as the Salvation Army Bayswater Youth Training Centre, or No. 1 home, as the senior home was termed, and Salvation Army Bayswater Boys Home, or No. 2 home, as the junior section was termed. The No. 2 home is now used as a camp and conference centre. The No. 1 home now operates as a farm and "SkillShare" centre.

These homes were established in 1897, on 409

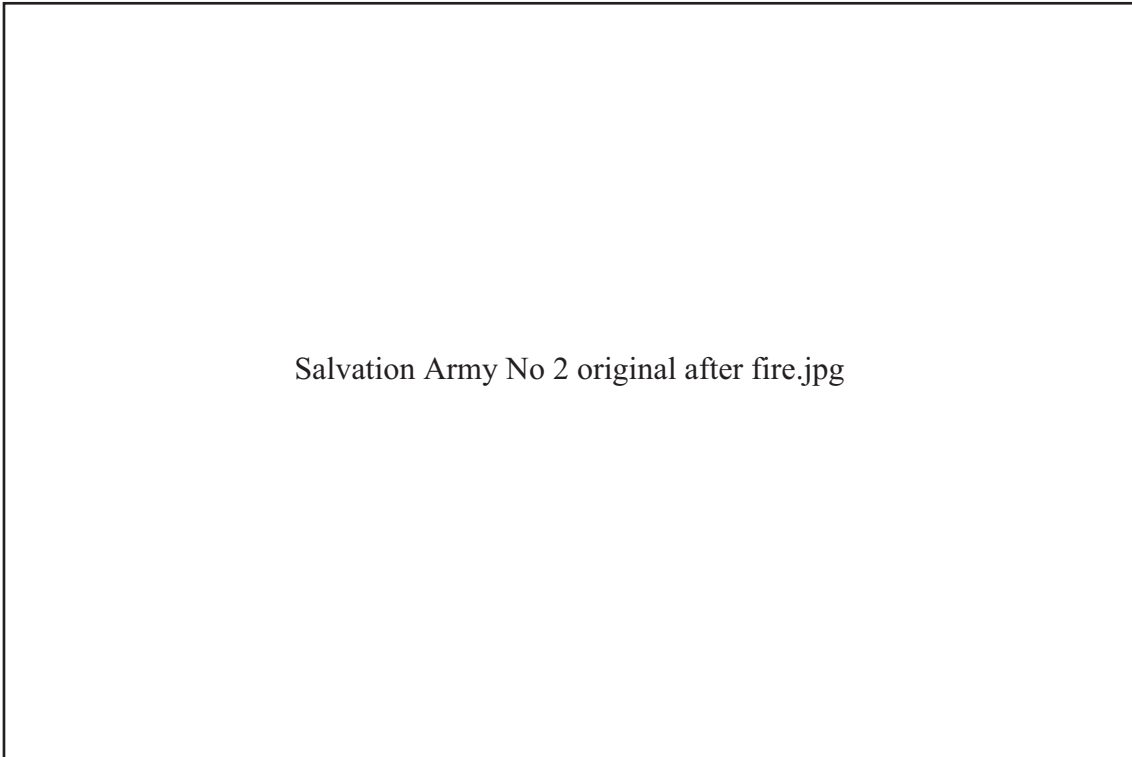
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acres of land part purchased from one of the original settlers, David Dobson. They once provided

help and guidance to many youths who committed offences which brought them into the hands of



Salvation Army No 2 original.jpg



Salvation Army No 2 original after fire.jpg

Top Photo: Original Salvation Army Home No 2 on Mountain Highway circa 1910. It was near the existing water tanks on Mountain Highway. This home was known as "The Garden Of Eden" and the name was prominently displayed on the front gate. The home was destroyed by fire in 1912.

The home is in the distance with Mountain Highway crossing in front.

Bottom Photo: Boys cleaning the site after the fire.

PHOTOS: Courtesy Knox Historical Society

Community Support

Basinites are well known as caring, compassionate people always willing to assist people in trouble. Whether it be homes destroyed by bushfires or lost children the community would always rally.

A good example of this is the story of a lady living in The Basin who took up breeding dogs. She fell on hard times and could not afford to feed her 12 dogs. Although ordered to destroy her dogs, she refused and was sent to jail. The community rallied and cleaned up her property, installed fenced runs for the dogs and looked after them until it could be arranged to have her released from jail.

the police, and for younger boys who, because of neglect, were in danger of falling into criminal tendencies. The homes originally commenced in response to a request by the Government of the day, for religious denominations to open homes to replace reformatories.

The first junior home was situated near the existing water tanks in Mountain Highway, but after being destroyed by fire in 1912, was rebuilt in Liverpool Road. This home was known as "The Garden Of Eden" and this name was prominently displayed on the front gate.

From 1931 to 1946 there was also a No. 3 home at the base of Sugarloaf Hill (behind the No. 2 home). The No. 3 home was a Government building transferred from Coode Island.

The senior home was rebuilt in brick in 1946, and in 1958 the junior home was rebuilt, the architect being the late Baxter Cox of "Wychwood", The Basin.

"The Basin Boys Home Special School" was built very early to cater for the special needs of boys from the junior Home. A fire in early 1972 destroyed almost half of the buildings and they eventually became vacant. The Primary School started using the buildings and in the early 1980's the buildings and land was amalgamated with the Primary School.

The Bayswater Youth Training Centre's farm and associated workshops provided valuable work experiences for thousands of boys who passed through its gates and in earlier times a large staff of Salvation Army Officers had the invaluable opportunity of working alongside these boys and getting to know them through this close work contact (Many retired officers still have regular contact with "boys" from their time at "Bayswater"). On 30 June 1987, the "Bayswater"

Youth Training Centre was closed by a shift in Government policies regarding institutional care.

Towards the end of 1988, the idea of utilising the workshops and the farm for further training developed and was encouraged by community minded persons. By January 1989 "SkillShare" became a reality. Commencing with Computer/Office Skills, Metalwork and Woodwork, participants were given every encouragement to gain entry to the work force including Grooming, Personal Development and Job Search Training.

From February 1989 through to December 1990, the Croydon Baptist Church leased a large room in which to operate an independent Christian School. Approximately 22 students attended daily.

January 1990 brought some changes and the consolidation of the "SkillShare" program when Farm Skills became an approved course and the "Office Skills" became more intensive. Woodwork was discontinued as it did not suit the local labour market needs of the time.

In February 1990, The Basin Playgroup became part of the "farm" using another large room and playground for their activities. A further initiative - JOBTRAIN Forklift - brought additional funding enabling training not only in Forklift but Computer/Stores and a Red Cross Certificated First Aid course. Early 1991 brought some variations on the theme with the addition of a JOBCLUB and further JOBTRAIN courses.

A fire at the Boronia Church of Christ (early 1991) left the church's Companion Club for primary school girls without a home and the club met for 12 months at the farm.

The Centre also continues to operate one of the few remaining Dairy Farms, Piggery and Stud Farms within the Melbourne Metropolitan area as well as providing several streams of service to the community.

Today, in our experiences of people, we find that there are still a lot of people "out there" who can benefit from farm life - from kids who still think milk comes in cartons, vegies out of the freezer, and hamburgers only from McDonald's, to older folks who see retirement as the end of the road rather than time when their experience could be a valuable contribution to the community. Somewhere in between are a growing number of single parent families, unemployed, sickness and invalid benefit recipients who seek a meaningful

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involvement in the community or the chance of a “holiday” away from their usual routines.

In these past four years a community of people has formed - men, women, children - all with varying reasons - to call this Centre “home”.

Whilst there are those who are paid to take responsibility, day to day needs of the community are met by an exchange of time - to work on the farm, look after the grounds, prepare a meal, do the laundry, clean house, take part in the shop-



Salvation Army No 2.jpg



Salvation Army No 1.jpg

Top Photo: Salvation Army Home No 2 on Liverpool Road circa 1915. Photo taken from Sugarloaf Hill. Methodist Church is in the middle (on Primary School grounds) and the “second” Primary School is on the right.

Bottom Photo: Salvation Army Home No 1 on Basin-Olinda Road circa 1920. David Dobsons original home is on the right

PHOTOS: Courtesy Knox Historical Society

ping, etc., so that the total needs of the community are met. The past four years have added further hundreds to the previous thousands who feel a sense of “belonging” to the Farm.

The Basin YWCA Friendly Circle

The Basin YWCA Friendly Circle was formed on the 11 March 1980 and used The Basin Progress Hall as their meeting place.

The foundation members were Brenda Jackson, Nance Fraser, Lorraine Burrows, Brenda Nudd, Iris Smith, Enid Franks, Ivy Lynch, Val Tokell and Joyce Yeamon. The object of the group as stated by the constitution is “To unite women and girls through faith in Jesus Christ in worldwide fellowship”. It is also to give ladies over 35 years a chance to meet and make new friends and to help the needy in the area.

From a small beginning, meeting twice a month, by 1994 they had over fifty members attending meetings. By the success of the club, friendly circles were formed in Mooroolbark and Wantirna.

Sadly, the group closed in 1999.

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second building	1
site of Hindu Temple	3
Sunday School	2
Stephens, Mrs.	
and Basin Presbyterian Church	1
Strickland, Rev. F. P.	
and Basin Presbyterian Church	1
T	
The Basin Presbyterian Church	
See Basin Presbyterian Church	
The Salvation Army Basin Centre	5
Tokell, Val	
Basin YWCA Friendly Circle	9
Turner, Vicar Geoffrey	
and St. Mary's Church of England	2
W	
Walker, Mrs.	
and Basin Presbyterian Church	1
Wicks Road	
and St. Mary's Church of England	2, 1
Wicks, Miss	
and St. Mary's Church of England	1
Y	
Yeadon, Mr.	
and Basin Methodist Church	2
Yeaman, Joyce	
Basin YWCA Friendly Circle	9
YWCA Friendly Circle	9
formation	2, 9