

THE GOULD LEAGUE OF WELLINGTON:

In 2010 the Gould League of N.S.W. will be one hundred years old.

On 22 October 1910 a meeting was held at Wellington School to form a group to protect and appreciate Australian birds. From this meeting the association known as the New South Wales Gould League grew. The League was named for John Gould, a naturalist and bird lover, born in England in 1810, who came to Australia in 1838 and travelled widely all over the country studying birds.

Mr Walter Finigan, a teacher at Wellington School in 1910, was a keen naturalist and interested in the protection and preservation of native birds. He and the School Principal, Mr Edward Webster, had heard of a group formed in 1909 in Victoria to protect birds and they discussed forming a similar organisation in Wellington. This discussion was held in the shade of an elm tree in the school playground.

A meeting was called and the N.S.W. Gould League was formed with a membership of 23. This small group could not have imagined that their association would grow into a nationwide movement which would have a great influence on Australia. In 1931 to mark the coming of age of the Gould League a large celebration was held with special guests, a commemorative photograph was taken and a Neville Cayley painting (of a magpie) was presented to the School to commemorate the foundation of the League.

In 1935 an inscribed plaque commemorating the foundation of the Gould League by Mr E. Webster and Mr W. Finigan was placed on the elm tree in the school playground under which the League was first discussed. The elm tree became known as the Gould League Tree.

In 1960 marking the 50th Anniversary of the League a coloured photograph was taken of the Gould League Tree and a framed and inscribed copy was sent to the President and Secretary of the League. - inscription

"THE TREE AND THE LEAGUE LIVE ON"

In 1967, during Wellington's Sesqui-centenary celebration the School entered a prize winning float in the procession, showing the foundation of the Gould League.

The 75th Anniversary of the League was celebrated on 22 October, 1985. A memorial cairn set around with native shrubs, was unveiled by the director General of Education, Mr R.B. Winder. Special guests included Mrs C. Johnstone, President of the Gould League of N.S.W., Mr P. Campbell, President of the 75th Gould League Celebrations, Mr J. Lambert, Western Region Area Director of Education and the Shire President and many representatives from local organisations and the community.

The Gould League of the past was represented by three of the original members from 1910. Proceedings were chaired by the Primary School Captains, Rebecca Keirle and Ka-Kit Wong. A Gould League rockery garden was opened by Mrs Johnstone and she planted a tree.

School staff and children as well as many of the guests dressed in 1910 style clothing and, after a picnic lunch, old-fashioned games were played on the grass. A display of craft and school projects with a bird theme as well as Gould League memorabilia was mounted in the Assembly Hall for the week.

Courtesy: Wellington Historical Society
Per: J.G.H.