

7. British Migration and the Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley

In its turn, in the events of this world, Australia became the land to which turned the people seeking a different style of life. The reasons were innumerable. Within Australia the populace caught the vision of developing their capacity and productivity by the welcoming of migrants to our shore.

In three areas the Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley gave impetus to the National verve

Initially to bring out a British migrant family and to nurture them into housing, employment and into a social life. Secondly to support the Queensland Centenary Festival of Migration which was Rotary inspired and Queensland Government supported.

Hence, from these two, stemmed the Rotary Club of Fortitude Valley Nation-wide activity for a "Rotary Migrant Ship" filled with British people nominated by British Rotary and sponsored by Australian Rotary.

In this History we present a facsimile of the literature which relates to the Coker Family in public print; a brief precis of the Festival of Migration; a digest of the herculean effort to "launch" the Rotary Ship.

The latter project is too vast for our History. It could be the subject of another publication. We hold a "Treasure Trove" of literature covering the project.

Festival of immigration

The Club's interest in immigration has been followed up to an even greater degree during the Rotary year under review (1958 - 59). The Rotary Ship in the 1957 - 1958 Rotary Year attracted considerable national and international interest. The success...prompted President Hugh Mackenzie, Tom Bryce and John Morgan to discuss a proposition whereby the Rotary Ship idea could be extended...a deputation consisting of DG George Nelson and DG Lex Fraser of District 255, Tom Bryce and John Morgan approached the Chief Secretary.

At this conference the "Festival of Immigration" scheme was born. A public committee on a Government basis was created with Rotarian Bob Wainwright as Chairman. At the first meeting numerous service and other bodies were represented and an outline from our Rotary suggestions was formulated. From this the great centenary celebration the "Festival of Immigration", which is a very successful highlight for Centenary Year, commenced on 30th May and continued seven days. The following were some of the programmes...

- June 1st Evening function at Wacol Immigration Centre including Broadcast of a migrant talent quest.
- June 2nd Visit of 100 migrant children to Parliament House culminating in a picnic luncheon in the Botanic Gardens.
- June 3rd Presentation to the Premier (Mr Nicklin) of an address of loyalty "New Faces of 1959" in the Festival Hall at 8.00 pm and mass naturalisation ceremonies throughout Queensland.