

First President E M Vains 1925 – 1926



Ernest Morton Vains came to Bendigo in 1897 from Kerang. After working for A. E. Wallis, he started his own business, E M Vains & Co. With a good background of the land, he invested in extensive grazing pursuits at Ravenswood, Dingee and Marong. Vains also became a director of the Bendigo Sun. After entering Bendigo Council, he became Mayor in 1924 - 1925.

How the Rotary Club of Bendigo began.

In 1924, business meetings were held (and early 1925) for the purpose of forming the Bendigo Rotary Club (the name that was recommended by our foundation members). Most of the meetings focused on who should be invited to join this prestigious gathering and where the club meetings should be held - The Shamrock or Favaloro's. With the enthusiasm of businessperson, Arthur H. Leggo, who had already contacted the Rotary Club of Melbourne with the idea of forming a Rotary Club in Bendigo, and the help of members from the Rotary Club of Melbourne, after much debate, a final list was drawn up in the Mayor's room and it was agreed that club meetings were to be held at Favaloro's.

Mayor of Bendigo, E.M. Vains

Mayor E.M.Vains chaired a meeting in Bendigo Town Hall on March 12, 1925. Along with 20 leading citizens of Bendigo (and prominent dignitaries and Rotarians from Melbourne Rotary Club) after much

discussion regarding the formation of a Rotary Club, Vains moved and Leggo seconded a motion to form the Rotary Club of Bendigo.

The beginnings of the Rotary Club of Bendigo.

A week later, Thursday, the 19th of March 1925, club meetings began. The first luncheon meeting of the 25 charter members was held in Favaloro's Café in Pall Mall under the chairmanship of its new President, the Mayor of Bendigo, Cr E.M Vains.

With the assistance of the Rotary Club of Melbourne, the formal structure of how meetings should be conducted was learned by our foundation members. If members needed encouragement, a mace (we still have it today) was given to the club Sergeant of Arms to assist with maintaining order. According to Professor W.A. Osborne, Commissioner of Rotary International (and our first guest speaker) the mace was once blood stained! Professor Osborne added that he hoped the mace would never be needed by the Sergeant of Arms to maintain order!

Our Foundation Members.

Most foundation members were business owners or industry leaders. Some members may be interested to know that in 1925 we had a Bishop, a local surgeon and a sharebroker among our foundation membership.

The Rotary year 1924/25 was known as our Pre-charter year. The first project the club took on in 1925/26 was to assist the Boy's Scout Appeal- particularly with Scout Week. Members promised 50 guineas for the appeal which, for the 25 foundation members, was a considerable sum of money for this time. An admission fee for the club members was 2 pound and 2 shillings. Half year subs for members were also 2 pound and 2 shillings.

The Rotary Club of Bendigo was officially chartered and incorporated in Rotary International as Club number 2104 on July 30th, 1925, with its sponsor Club being the Rotary Club of Melbourne.

The only other Rotary Clubs in Australia, when our club formed, were Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Hobart, Launceston and Newcastle.

The Rotary Club of Bendigo has sponsored six Rotary clubs in the region: Castlemaine (1935), Echuca-Moama (1948), Bendigo South (1959), Eaglehawk (1966), Bendigo Strathdale (1978), and Bendigo Sandhurst (1988)

The Rotary Club of Bendigo was the 8th Rotary Club in Australia, the 2nd in Victoria and the 1st non-metropolitan Rotary Club.

In its first year of existence the Club increased membership to 30 active members, held 45 luncheon meetings at Favaloro's and seven at the Hotel Shamrock and had diverse, educational, and entertaining presentations from its guest speakers.

