



# HELM



## Heritage of East Lake Macquarie

Find us on: Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/helm2281/>  
email: [helm2281@gmail.com](mailto:helm2281@gmail.com)  
web: <https://helm.asn.au>

OCT-NOV

### FABULOUS FIFTIES

2022

Australia emerged from decades of hardship, austerity and sacrifice during the Depression, World War II and its after-effects, to a new era of optimism, growth and prosperity in the 1950s. Three of Australia's icons came to the fore – Holden cars, Victa lawnmowers and Sunbeam mixmasters. This was the era of the baby boomers.



Sources: MAAS  
Wikipedia;  
sites.google;  
Tamworth  
Museum.

In 1954 Queen Elizabeth II spent nearly two months in Australia on a very tightly scheduled royal visit, that encompassed some 60 cities and towns. Beginning on Friday, February 5, five days were spent visiting Newcastle. The Official Souvenir Programme announced a visit to Lake Macquarie on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> February, with tours of Lake Macquarie, followed by a Regatta at Belmont of sailing craft, yachts, 16s, VJs and VSs. A Monster Aquatic Carnival was arranged by Lake Macquarie Royal Motor Yacht Club, Toronto.



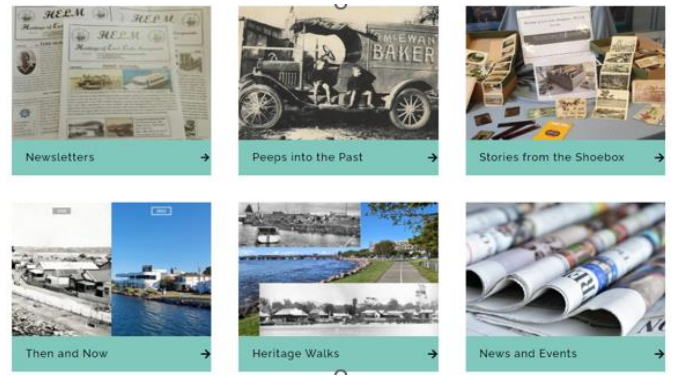
People wanted and could afford greater comfort and style rather than functionality in their homes – new furniture, electrical appliances, refrigerators, new Laminex surfaces in many colours, Dunlopillo carpet underlay. Greater car ownership led to many moving out of town centres and away from public transport routes into the suburbs. There was greater freedom, variety and time for leisure: dinky toys, kites, monopoly, plasticine, matchbox toys, Meccano. Billy cart derbies were popular in Belmont; Roller skating in Swansea; motor bikes at Nicoll Park. Sources: LMCC; G & N Boyd; Speedway and road race history.



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Thank you to Pat Conroy and staff, kindly supporting our community; and encouraging the preservation and sharing of our heritage.



## HELM's new website launch celebration, 28<sup>th</sup> September, 2022 at Swansea RSL.

120 fun loving people from near and far joined us for the launch, lunch and a journey into the 1950s fashions and customs with Cavalcade of History and Fashion who travelled from Sydney. The room, decorated in 1950s style, was a buzz of chatter and giggles of recalled memories as the fashions were shown around the tables. Unfortunately, due to Parliamentary commitments, our MPs Pat Conroy and Yasmin Catley were unable to attend but were represented by Emelie Houston. We're grateful to the organisations and people who supported and contributed to our special day: Swansea RSL, Heritage NSW; Ray Cosier of Raymar Signs; Susie England Quinn of Luscious Little Bites; Daniel Zeaiter, Codex IT Services, for building the website which serves as a home for all of our projects and makes it easy for members of the community to access at <https://helm.asn.au>

Going by the feedback forms, people enjoyed themselves: "What a fabulous initiative. The website is a wonderful resource to the generations of our community. I am particularly impressed with the then and now page." ..... "Great community resource. Fantastic presentation. Lovely fashions – thoroughly enjoyable." ..... "Great to hear about the work being done by such dedicated volunteers." We've included a few photos which showcase our day.



## FASHION TRENDS

"Fashion is not something that exists in dresses only...fashion has to do with ideas, the way we live, what is happening." Coco Chanel

After years of rationing in the 40s, which dictated conserving the amount of material used and featured pencil-line suits, there was an explosion of fabrics, colour, and flamboyant skirts with layers of petticoats. Many outfits featured full pleated skirts, polka dots, florals, wide collars.

Man-made fibres kept prices down – rayon, nylon, polyester, and terylene; not to mention the indestructible crimplene. Fashion kings such as Dior emphasized bust, waist and hips. "...In this time of luxury and style, several new groups emerged, the modern housewife, the career woman and the new teenage culture. Each of these groups developed their own unique style of fashion and an evolution began. Australian women started wanting the same fashion as the celebrities they saw in Vogue magazines. They were influenced by fashions seen in movies or for teenagers, what their rock & roll idols were wearing. New synthetic materials, like nylon and polyester, revolutionised the fashion industry as new styles and silhouettes could be created, clothing became easier to care for and cheaper...." Source: Cavalcade

The presentation by Cavalcade gave us glimpses into the way of life, and the lives of women in the 1950s.



**THE FOOD SCENE** Several major events and developments were to have a lasting influence on Australian food. Wartime rationing of many food items and petrol ended in **1950**.

In **1956** the Olympic Games came to Melbourne. Many international chefs were recruited to cater for the varied eating habits and customs of athletes and spectators. In the Olympic village, 10 kitchens and 20 dining rooms processed 2 tons of meat and 3 tons of vegetables daily. After the games, many chefs stayed in Australia, continuing the international culinary experience, especially in Melbourne.

Television broadcasting began in Sydney, October **1956**, soon followed by another 4 stations just in time to broadcast the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games. This created the perfect opportunity to promote products such as Pepsi, Aeroplane Jelly, Vegemite and Koolmints. As television was black and white, food advertising often lacked visual appeal and depended on catchy jingles and skits.

**1957** created a major turning point. The first Australian shopping mall was opened in Brisbane. The formula of providing a department store, supermarket, specialty stores and car parking proved to be popular as people moved to the suburbs and car ownership increased; and soon spread to other cities. Woolworths opened their first food store in Sydney – a self-service section with groceries, vegetables, meat and deli items at the back of the variety store in Dee Why. The trial proved successful and soon spread; to be followed by Coles in 1958.

Some of the most successful product innovations are still with us today.

One of the first snack foods – **Twisties** (cheese flavour) was developed by a Melbourne businessman in **1950**. With a slogan of “Life’s pretty straight without Twisties”, it remains a popular snack.

**1951** Frank McEnroe, boilermaker, from Bendigo developed the Chinese style deep fried **Chiko** roll to sell while catering at football and events. The first Chiko roll was sold at Wagga Wagga Agricultural Show.

The **ESKY** portable cooler, “Auto Box”, was designed by Malley’s for picnics by the growing car market in **1952**. It was made from galvanised iron, green enamel and chrome finish. It held 6 pint bottles and a 3 tray food rack.

**1953** Ron Street, engineer and nephew of ice cream founder, Ted Street, developed the chocolate Paddle Pop, becoming an international favourite. Ron is said to have turned down a job at NASA for the family business.

**1954** saw the Brockhoff Biscuit Co in Melbourne produce BBQ **Savoury Shapes** biscuits. They proved to be a popular snack with drinks, and soon other flavours were added. The company later merged with Arnotts.



**1955** United Dairies, the milk company, adopted techniques from the USA to produce chilled orange juice **Orchy**. Despite a short shelf life, it tasted like freshly squeezed juice and did not have the cooked taste of canned juice. Most oranges were sourced from the Gosford area – a big citrus growing area at the time.

**Barossa Pearl** was launched in **1956** for the Olympic Games - a sweet fruity sparkling wine based on the German style “Perlwein”. It led to many spinoffs among other wine makers – including Rhinegold and Porphyrl Pearl.

**1957** Max “Nobby” Noblet, a South Australian athlete and Lacrosse player founded **Nibble Nobbys Nuts**, using his nickname as the brand. In 2021 a special \$1 coin was released as part of the Great Aussie Coin Hunt.

**1958** the first **beer cans** in Australia were made of steel by VB (Victoria Bitter) and needed a “church key” to open by punching a triangular hole in each side of the lid.



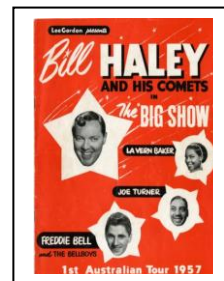
**1959** **Lipton tea bags** arrived in Australia, promoted as quick, clean and easy for the husband to make an early morning cuppa for his wife.

Source: *Timeline of Australian Food*. Jan O’Connell.



## MUSIC AND DANCING

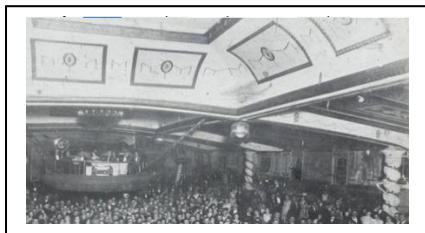
In the early 50's the music scene was quite sedate. Before the advent of TV, radio broadcast mostly classics, drama and light entertainment. That changed with the screening of the film "Blackboard Jungle" featuring "Rock around the Clock" by Bill Haley and his Comets. In 1956 TV, Elvis and jukeboxes brought rock'n'roll to the forefront. The 1957 Australian tour organised by US promoter Lee Gordon headlining Bill Haley began in Newcastle, at the Stadium (now the site of Marketown Shopping Centre). Tickets to the January 8 show sold out in an hour. By 1958, realising the popularity and power of the new phenomenon, radio began to play Top 40 hits, including local stars Johnny O'Keefe and Col Joye with Bye Bye Baby Goodbye. This was soon followed by Channel 9 with Bandstand; and ABC's Six O'clock Rock.



Source: *Roll over Beethoven*

## PALAIS ROYALE

In the 1950s, the Palais was THE meeting place. The dance hall operated three nights a week. Groups of girls got dolled up wearing dresses (often self-made), petticoats, stockings, stilletoes. Boys dressed in collar, tie and



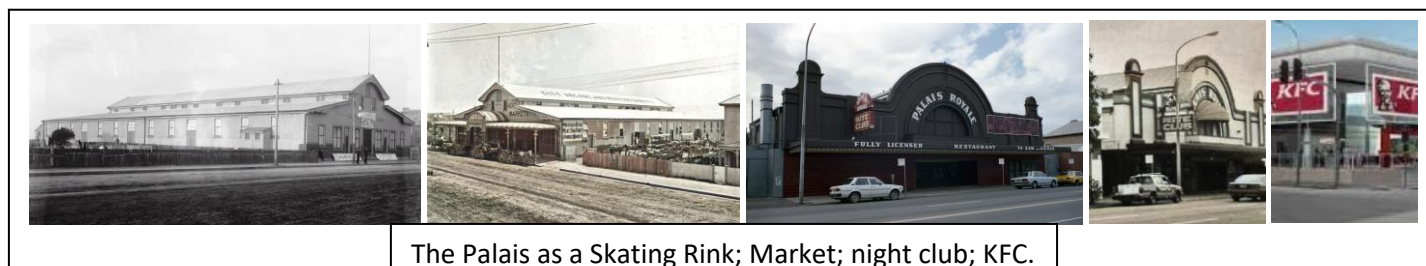
sports jacket. They often had a few beers before coming, as alcohol was not allowed. They made their way through a grand foyer into the main hall under a high vaulted ornate ceiling to their usual gathering spots. Big ceiling fans were turned on for hot nights. A resident band performed on a large stage framed by carved wooden pillars resembling corkscrews.

The Mezzanine level was a good vantage spot to watch over a thousand dancers below. It was good clean fun dancing the night away, sometimes until 4 in the morning. Couples would glide around the dance floor to waltzes, the quickstep, jazz waltzes, gypsy taps, Pride of Erin. The progressive Barn dance was always popular as you got to meet more people. The bottom corner was fenced off, and sometimes referred to as the "bull pen". This section was for the jivers and jitterbuggers. The most notable performer of the jitterbug was the agile and energetic Phyllis Mook, who made her name on the stage at the Palais. Her family ran a fruit and vegetable business in Swansea for a time.



Sadly patronage declined as TV and the club circuit took over in the 60s. Sources: *Newc. Herald; Teresa Purnell.*

The Palais building has had a varied history. The original building of 1888 was the Elite Skating Rink, built on a portion of land that was once a government farm close to Cottage Creek, at the west end of Hunter Street. Being away from the centre of town, and as skating was declining in popularity it was decided that the venture would be more profitable by converting it to the City Arcade and Western Markets. A large bullnose verandah and canopy were built in 1891 with large glass windows for display: – meat, fish, vegetables and other produce. Despite being in an ideal position, close to the former Honeysuckle Railway Station, financial success waned. Another major renovation, with the famous art deco façade converted the building into a dance hall in 1929. As that era came to a close, a night club was established for 20 years, 1979-1999. After some years it was leased as a youth centre, but fell into disrepair and became graffiti tagged. The death knell came with the June 2007 Pasha Bulka storm, making it structurally unsound. Despite heritage listing the Palais was demolished in 2008, and replaced by the KFC building. Sources: *UON, Newc. Herald, West End Adventures, Soundworld.com.au*



The Palais as a Skating Rink; Market; night club; KFC.