

TOY GROUP

CLUB HISTORY - STORY OF the TOY GROUP

Toy making became an integral part of the club when nearly half of all club members (18), came together for a "Toy Project Night" on the 19th August 1998 at George Hills home workshop. George had organised a donation of timber for the project from, Beenatree Crafts P/L, a long standing sponsor of the club.

Subsequent sessions at both George's and Okke Huitema's home workshops resulted in 84 toys being donated to the Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul Societies for free distribution to local children that Christmas. There were blue trains with plum red smoke stacks, pull along animals, pencil cases, doll cradles and toy tool boxes, something for everyone!

The toy project evolved into "Christmas Toys", leading to hundreds of toys being made and donated to worthy children in the region over the years each Christmas. The program petered out in 2005 with as recorded, "the club's generosity being taken for granted by most charities involved" and George stepping away from the coal face.

Around the time the toy project started in 1998, the concept of a "Kids Corner" at club demonstrations and other activities was introduced. The concepts first outing at the CDLC (now BCEAC) Garden & Craft Expo on the 28th and 29th November 1998, raised \$163 for the club. Kid's Corner became part of the clubs activities at the 1999 Wonthaggi Show and was soon followed by events at the State Coal Mine, Churchill Island and the Foster Show.



1998 also saw club membership reach 50 for the first time after hovering in the 40s for several years. 2015/2016 membership was over 80. 1998 was also the year that "get our own premises" was officially recorded. Observed in March 1999 by president, George Hill, the "Club is becoming increasingly involved in the Community of the Bass Coast Shire through our activities such as demo's and sales and latterly, kid's corners." That year,

the club donated 96 toys to charitable organisations.

Kid's Corner has evolved into the toy group of today, where a range of around ten toys are selected or created for the club each year. These are made into kits for children to assemble at events, or children from schools or other institutions come to us. Club pyrographers Billie Moat, Jim Kilpatrick,

Michael Bladen and others were happy to support Kids Corner events by personalising each assembled toy with a name or title burned onto the toy, something the kids, their parents and toymakers are thrilled to see.

During George's time, toys and toy kits were constructed initially at his home workshop. This later expanded to include our first workshop on the BCAEC site, what we now recognise as the little building with plants painted all over it that stands next to the turners workshop (first rented in April 1999), a rented classroom at BCAEC and Okke's home workshop. When Janice Aucote, Okke and Betty Huitema's daughter, whose child was being treated in the hospital at the time, suggested through her dad in November 2001, "the club make and donate six small chairs for children to use at the Royal Children's Hospital." This was agreed to and dad, with the help of other members, particularly Melanie Stubbs, gave the chairs to thrilled RCH staff in July 2002. These six chairs are still in good condition after nearly 14 years continuous use, a testament to the expertise of all those involved.



Toy making continued at Eric Thorpe's home workshop after George resigned in August 2005. When the clubs own second workshop and meeting room was completed in 2010, toy making returned to the BCAEC site under Ron Snooks leadership. Ron was one of the 18 members in 1998 and has remained an active and creative toy maker and club member ever since, a fine effort indeed. The current range of toys includes a Racing Car based on Ron's Show and Tell entry at the April 1999, General Meeting.

From the first \$163 in November 1998, Kid's Corner/ Toy Group has since returned many thousands of dollars to the clubs finances. This has paid for a lot of the equipment and facilities we all enjoy today. As the clubs only direct community participation activity, **it brings the local community to the Wonthaggi Woodcrafters!** This includes countless smiles and joy to club members, kids and their parents alike.

With toy making the only group activity each Tuesday, their work and contribution to the club probably slips below the notice or radar of most members who are normally introduced to the club on other days. Each Tuesday is a full day to try and meet event commitments, allows the group to get together and socialise over lunch. This involvement by default, means the toy group members are some of the clubs most productive participants. 100% of all proceeds from toy activities is returned to the club, unless agreed otherwise by the committee. In season 2014/2015, the group

made around 550 wooden toys in both kit and assembled form, enjoyed sales in excess of \$4500, attended six community events and packaged kits for four club sales venues. This was achieved from a range of around 15 models by 8 to 10 members meeting each Tuesday at the club with some 'homework' carried out at home. Kid's Corner supported by club pyrographers and turners 'woodturning' demonstrations have helped attract new members to the club.

The ravages of time Mother Nature brings to us all, is now taking its toll on those once proud, strong and capable bodies of each and every toy maker. This, together with the Tuesday lack of profile, is seeing a once productive and resourceful group being diminished.

If Kid's Corner is to continue in its present form and retain all the associated benefits the club enjoys, your encouragement and support is required to keep this vital part of the club going. Pop in any Tuesday to see for yourself the range and how we go about creating a toy, visitors are always welcome.

Records do not permit listing all club members involved with toy making in the early years. Names that are mentioned in the records or do come to mind in no particular order are:

George Hill	Okke Huitema	Melanie Stubbs	Kay Illingworth
Ron Snooks	Roy Jordan	Bill Drover	Bill Martin
Eric Thorpe	John Reilly	Doug Phillips	Billie Moat
Arthur Phillips	Ray Dobbie	Evonne Phillips	Mike Denton
Harry Smith	Joe Boland		

Apologies for any members I have not named.

AGH: 30th June 2016