

YHA – 80 YEARS YOUNG



It was on this day 80 years ago, 4th September 1939, that 150 people gathered at the Melbourne Town Hall and formed the Youth Hostels Association. They had been inspired by tales of successful YHAs operating in Europe that some Australians had stayed in.

The following year, a conference in regional Victoria progressed the idea. The first YHA was just outside Melbourne at Warrandyte at Pound Bend on the Yarra River. The building was leased for £1 per year and operated by the new YHA.

The first group that stayed was a girls' school. The first individual guest was a guy from Liverpool who was attempting to walk around the world. YHA was international from the beginning.

Ideas expressed for the new organisation included a sense of adventure, exploration, meeting new people, tolerance (war clouds were looming), respect, love of nature and an appreciation of people's differences.

To commemorate 80 years this weekend, the YHA Board of Directors is meeting in Melbourne and staying at the Melbourne Central YHA. There is an important agenda looking at plans for the future. A dinner will be held with some of the people who built up YHA in Victoria. The following day there will be a bushwalk at Pound Bend including a celebration at the plaque on the site of that very first Youth Hostel at Warrandyte.

What's great about YHA is that the ideas behind it are timeless and because of that have endured. We can be proud to be part of what YHA has developed into. **The hostels have changed beyond recognition and YHA must keep changing too, but the fundamentals of bringing people from all over the world together will not.**



The first YHA at Warrandyte, 1940



Melbourne Central YHA, 2017