

# George Roy Acaster Beardsworth



When the Chelsea district was first permanently settled the area was part of the Shire of Dandenong. That it took only two decades before the Carrum Borough was created in 1920, says much about the dedication and passion of the civic leaders who were behind the push for severance. One man stood out amongst the early civic leaders, his name was Roy Beardsworth and he is rightfully acknowledged as the father of Chelsea.

George Roy Acaster Beardsworth was born in Queensland in 1888, the eldest surviving son of Ernest Beardsworth and Edith Rose *née* Dean. Ernest Beardsworth was a pioneer of the sugar industry and after a time in Western Australia in 1890s, around 1906 the family moved to Keele Street, Collingwood. Young Roy attended a boys' camp at Chelsea and was soon a regular weekender before permanently settling there in 1914 with his new bride, Elsie Elizabeth *née* Hart.

Beardsworth immediately involved himself in his local community, joining the Chelsea Progress Association where he rose to President. In 1915 he became the Hon. Secretary of the local Repatriation Council, assisting returning soldiers. He served on the Chelsea School Committee, was Chairman of the Chelsea Fire Brigade, President of the Chelsea Football Club and had a long involvement with the Chelsea Life Saving Club, as a life saver, President and finally a Life Member.

Beardsworth was at the forefront of every progressive movement in the city and expended every ounce of time and energy for the betterment of the district. He played a foremost role in the severance movement, took a leading part in the fight for a permanent water supply, worked tirelessly towards improved postal and railway services, electrification and road construction and lobbied for a district court house and community hospital. Beardsworth's greatest achievement was the establishment of the Mordialloc-Chelsea High School in 1924, which he was the first to agitate for.

In 1922 he was elected as a Councillor for the Borough of Carrum and in 1923 he was appointed a Magistrate for the District and served as a Justice of the Peace. He became the first Labor Mayor elected for Chelsea in 1930/31 and again served as Mayor in

1938/39. A fearless fighter in the Council chamber, he was always fair in debate, and no matter how bitter the argument, he always retained the friendship of his opponents who admired the clear and concise way he stated his case.

He was deeply committed to the Australian Labor Party. During his 15 years working with MacRobertson's Confectioners, Beardsworth joined the union movement as an organiser for the Storeman and Packers' Union. By 1933, he was Secretary of the Hospital Employees' Union and a delegate to the Trades Hall Council. He also served as State President of the Labor Party and was unsuccessful on four occasions in a bid to enter the political arena, standing twice for State Parliament and twice for Federal Parliament.

On 15 November 1939, seven members of the Union were travelling to Ararat for a meeting. Just beyond the township of Melton on the Ballarat Road, Beardsworth lost control of the car when a tyre blew out. He did his best to keep the vehicle straight however it skidded onto the wrong side of the road before swinging around one and a half times, rolling on its side and then righting itself. Beardsworth died eleven days later at St Vincent's Hospital in Fitzroy, leaving his wife and four children. Sadly for his family, his tragic death was the third in just four months following the passing of his mother and younger brother Raymond.

At his death he was accorded the honour of a civic funeral, the first awarded by the Chelsea Council. His funeral cortege left his home in Blantyre Avenue and a large number of Trades Hall & ALP officials attended his funeral at the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery. The union movement, the district and the nation were left the poorer for his passing. The Chelsea News described him as *"probably the most outstanding man in the municipal history of the district"*.

Word Count: 678 words  
File Created: 6 February 2020

Source:

Labor Call, 30 Nov 1939, p.1 obituary

Labour Call 2 Sept 26 p.5

City of Chelsea News

Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Display 2015

Beardsworth, George Roy Acaster, Inquest 1940/52, PROV.

Whitehead, G., "George Roy Acaster Beardsworth: Councillor and Activist", City of Kingston Historical Website

<http://localhistory.kingston.vic.gov.au/htm/article/443.htm>

Ancestry Australia