



Geelong News
Wednesday 18/11/2009

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Newtown great-grandmother remembers her first Gala Day parade

City's Gala colour

Kyle Pollard

THOUSANDS of people are expected to flood Geelong's city streets on Saturday for the 93rd annual Gala Day.

Malop Street will be transformed into a sea of colour and frivolity from 11am, before a family day kicks-off at Steampacket Gardens from noon.

Started in 1916 to raise funds for the Red Cross to help war veterans, Gala Day has long been the must-see event for Geelong families.

Newtown resident Mary Cook, who first marched in the Gala Day parade as a student in the 1920s, said her family always had a link with the day.

"My mother helped organise Gala Day when the idea was first put forward," Mrs Cook said.

"It started out as a fundraiser for the Red Cross and then the Geelong Hospital took over the event in the late 1920s."

Mrs Cook said she would always remember the marching lessons students at Newtown Primary School received in preparation for the day.

"Most of the schools would have to

do their marching lessons before the day so they all looked good," Mrs Cook said.

"I also remember having to whip up the cream for the sponges for the stalls in the street which was really hard work."

While the 2009 Gala Day will share some similar aspects to the inaugural event, the need to keep with the times has resulted in many changes over the years.

Entertainment this year will include the likes of Spongebob Squarepants and Captain Feathersword, while the Waterfront Youth Activities Area will host a gig by *Neighbours* star Sam Clark, who recently released his debut single *Broken*.

City Hall has advised that Malop Street and the north end of Moorabool Street will be closed from 10am to 12.30pm, and Brougham Street will have restricted access while the parade is in process.

The parade along Malop Street will start at 11am, with the family fun day running from noon to 5pm.



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LOOKING BACK: Mary Cook looks through some of her Gala Day memorabilia yesterday ahead of Saturday's celebrations.
Photo: PHILLIP STUBBS