

Basic Detail Report



00015654

Title

World War II fundraising chocolate wheel

Date

1941 - 1945

Medium

Wood, masonite, paint, steel, iron

Dimensions

Display dimensions: 2000 x 1200 x 1000 mm: Height: 2000mm. Diameter of wheel 1200mm. Depth of stand 1000mm.

Name

Game

History

Chocolate Wheels (occasionally known as Raffle Wheels) were used as fund raising devices for worthwhile causes.

As they were held to be instruments of gambling a licence was needed to operate them. The name 'chocolate wheel' derives from the fact that pre WWII the prizes were almost always small boxes of Cadbury's or Nestle's chocolates. It is not confirmed who made the wheels but it is assumed that small fundraising groups would have been able to hire them, while larger permanently based groups, such as the Red Cross, would have owned wheels that were used constantly in shopping centres or country shows. If there were a hundred numbers on a wheel a hundred numbered tickets would be sold. The wheel was then spun and the ticket corresponding to the number between the pins at the top when the wheel stopped won the prize. There might be a single prize or multiple ones for each batch of tickets sold. The cost of tickets in WWII ranged from 3d to a shilling. The wheels were most commonly seen in operation in larger cities and country shows. Organisations running the wheels during the war included the Red Cross, Australian Comforts Fund, Volunteer Defence Corps, ambulance services, Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs), the armed services and, especially, the US armed services. The latter set up the wheels at dances and the prizes were likely to include chocolates and stockings (both rationed in Australia but readily available to the Americans). Prizes offered with Australian - run wheels during the war were generally edible, often something hard to get though not necessarily rationed, but rarely included chocolate. They included cases of fruit, sacks of vegetables, poultry (dead and alive), eggs and butter and kitchen utensils were sometimes donated by shops. The decoration on this particular wheel indicates that it dates some time between the arrival of American troops in Australia in February 1942 and 1945. Thousands of American troops arrived in Australia in 1942 and by 1943 there were 250, 000. Smaller hand - held versions of the

wheels were made in this period and were known, in Victoria at least, as 'toodle 'em bucks'. They were used for Melbourne Cup sweeps and other forms of minor illegal gambling.