

Leongatha and District Historical Society

P O Box 431 Leongatha 3953



Newsletter

Volume 1 Number 1 May 2004

President : Lola Bailey

Secretary : Lyn Skillern Tel 56686304

OAM for John Murphy

Local historian John Murphy received an Order Of Australia Medal in the Australia Day honours. John has been a prolific writer of local histories, his most well known works being the Woorayl Shire history *No Parallel* and the Mirboo Shire history *On the Ridge*. It was a great recognition for John who was a founding member of our society in 1964. Later in 2004 John will be launching his new book about the history of the Leongatha Memorial Hall.

Australia Day 2004

On Australia Day January 26th the Society ran a very successful tour of the Leongatha cemetery led by John Murphy and Wal Cayzer. A group of around 60 people heard about the lives of pioneers and local families and the contribution made by people buried in the cemetery to the local community.

The Centenary of Royal Life Saving

The search is on for Victoria's 100 oldest lifesavers. Royal Life Saving will be celebrating its centenary this year and

would like to find those who were participating in life saving activities in days gone by. If you know of someone who may be one of our state's oldest life savers, please contact Frances Evans at the Royal Life Saving Society Victoria Tel 0395670015.

South Gippsland Historical Network

At the last meeting of the South Gippsland Historical Network on March 11th it was decided to invite all historical groups in the South Gippsland Region to join the Network and contribute \$10 a year to the group to cover communication costs. Lyn Skillern will act as secretary and set up a database of member organisations to circulate amongst member groups. The next meeting will be at the Korumburra Historical Society's rooms at the Old Shire Office Korumburra on June 10th at 10.30 am. For further information, contact the Secretary on 56686304

Naming of Lanes

In 2003 the South Gippsland Shire asked John Murphy to provide appropriate names for the many unnamed lanes in

Leongatha. This was done and now you can drive around and see people and activities remembered in names such as Dr

Wood Lane, Saleyards Lane and Scouts Lane.

Feature Articles

Early fencing methods used in South Gippsland by Ian Lester

Some early fences were simply a high roughly stacked row of tree branches. These were quick and easy to build as materials were readily available but had the disadvantage of covering a relatively wide area of land and thus reduced the area of pasture available.

A more formal variation was the chock and log method. This style was built by using short logs (chocks) approximately 3 feet (900cm) long and 1 foot (30cm) in diameter and long logs (spars) about 8 inches (20 cm) in diameter and 12 feet (3.5 metres) long. A row of chocks was placed on the ground approximately 10 feet (3 metres) apart and at 90 degrees to the line of the fence. The spars were then placed on top of the chocks. Another row of chocks followed then a row of spars. A fence 3 chocks and spars high was usual though more could be used if necessary. The main problem with this method was that large animals particularly pigs with their strong necks could easily dislodge the rails and demolish the fence.

Another form of fencing was the dogleg fence which used spars similar to the chock and log fence but had no chocks. The logs were stacked on one another in a shallow zigzag.

The most popular type of fence was the post and rail fence which used split posts and wooden rails. Much preparation work was needed prior to building. Logs were

cut to length 6 feet (1.8 metres) for the posts and 9 feet (2.7 metres) for the rails and then split into radial segments using steel wedges and may have required some shaping and trimming. The ends of the rails had to be shaped to fit the posts, probably with an adze. Posts were morticed

(holes cut through them) to support the rails. This was done with a mortice axe or an auger. Fences had mainly 2 or 3 rails dictated by the type of animal to be restrained. (See photo 1.)

As transport improved and wire became more readily available picket/paling fences were built. These used spit timber pieces 3 inches wide, 3/4 inch thick and 3 feet (1 metre) long. The pieces of timber were supported at the top and bottom by 2 strands of wire. As each picket was placed between the wires the wires were crossed to hold the picket in place vertically. This type of fence was best for small animals such as lambs, piglets and poultry. (see photo 2)

Much of the early fencing was destroyed by bush fires especially in 1898 and most would have been replaced by wire fences similar to what we have today. Fencing of some type was essential to the early farming pioneer. Without fencing they could not secure their animals. If animals wandered into the forest they may have become lost or be attacked by wild dogs. These animals were so important as a source of meat, milk, wool and leather for the pioneers own use and as a source of much needed income. The fences described in this article were very important and they were easily made out of the timber so readily available to the pioneers of this region in particular.

"Hollyside" - the history of her home at Leongatha North

by Pat Spinks

Hollyside was selected in the 1880's by Laurence Leech. He was a butcher by trade and apparently operated his business from the farm until he eventually had a shop in Leongatha.

According to an entry in a collection of articles written by old identities of the district, Larry Leech sold his property to James Allison in the late 1880's. The butchering business was taken over by Peter Johnson and this is where Dick Watson learned his trade. This agrees with a letter from the Allison family stating that 'Hollyside' was bought by the James Allison in the late 1880's. Matthew Allison, younger brother of James selected land at Koorooman (now Leongatha North) in the early 1880's. He called his property "Mavisbank" and the house still stand in Smirl's Rd Leongatha North.

While most of "Hollyside" was built by James Allison, he may have built onto an earlier structure erected by Larry Leech. The house is very similar to "Mavisbank" and is possibly the work of the same builder. The kitchen area was possibly part of an earlier building. The bricks in its chimney are quite different and may be locally made. The two rooms off the kitchen (2 and 3 on plan) have small paned colonial windows and architraves which differ inside and out from the rest of the

house (see c on plan). I believe therefor that the original building was a kitchen or living room with a scullery (a cold water tap which brought water from the outside tank into the house was visible in the 1950's in this room) and a bedroom opening off it. The present door into the hallway has a night latch to lock up before bed and was obviously the main door at that time.(see 8 on plan)

The new section to be added to the house was the dining/sitting room, three bedrooms and the front section of the hallway(see 4 and 8 on plan). These walls are pine lined like the earlier section but they are roughly arranged (with gaps) to hold up the hessian which forms the base for the wall paper. As the wall paper was applied over a base of newspaper it has been possible to date this section. This was built after June 14th 1890 which is after James Allison bought the property. Most of the newspapers are dated before this with June being the latest used. I have kept the dates as it was impossible to preserve the actual papers. I have a copy of the VFA ladder for June 14th 1890 which is interesting because it predates the VFL. A front verandah was across the front of the house as far as the corner with iron lace work only to this corner(See 9 on plan and photo). We found the original lace work under the house and were puzzled as to why it did not go as far as the corner on the existing verandah. The last piece of lace work was probably removed when Ray Moon painted the house in the fifties.

'Hollyside" was bought by Gunner Gunnensen in 1910. He had a timber business in Melbourne and owned other properties. The family bred racehorses and grew barley at "Hollyside" but probably only lived there part time. The barley must have been grown in the 'long paddock" as it was the only one without rocks. Frequent ploughing had enabled the rocks to be removed. The Gunnensens most likely added the big lounge, the study, the lower hallway and the side verandah. Building materials and methods are quite different in this section as is how the roof is fixed. The Gunnensens also added three skylights and a window above the verandah into the big lounge. When renovating the side verandah I found rows of tacks and fly wire remnants along the edge of two skylights. As one of the Gunnensen children had TB, and this was one reason for buying the property, I think an effort may have been made to make fresh air sleeping facilities for the lad on the side verandah.

One of the buildings off the back verandah is older than the house itself. The present laundry was originally a dairy and was shifted from another part of the property on rollers to its present position (see 14 on plan). It has the original wooden louvres windows and a shingle roof. The bathroom was built on the side of this and had weatherboards on the shared wall (see 15 on plan). The present back verandah is higher than the original one which was unsafe and had to be replaced. The curved section of the back verandah would have been added when the doorway into the kitchen was added by the Gunnensens when they reorientated the kitchen (see 16 on plan). The Gunnensen photos show building right to the back fence. These may have been workmen's cottages or servants quarters. There was a school room outside the gate until the fifties. It was reported to have been used to educate the children of workmen on the property and was

probably used until 1912 when the Wooreen school opened. When the Gunnensens sold the property in 1920 it was bought by the government for soldier settlement. The next section of the history is being researched. Although James Allison sold the property to Gunnensen in 1910 he was still in the district in 1912 when his children were enrolled at Wooreen School. On the 1924 parish map J Allison appears as owner of the homestead section of the farm. This may be John Forrest Allison son of James, whose own son Kenneth started school at Wooreen in 1918.

George Appleyard was most likely the next owner in the 1920's. In 1925 Lillian and Douglas Appleyard were enrolled at Wooreen School and the Appleyards continued to own the property until 1945. Mt Eccles South School opened in 1931 and the teacher James Docherty boarded at "Hollyside" for some time. He remembered living in the front bedroom overlooking the holly hedge (see 5 on plan). At the back to Mt Eccles South in the 1970's he asked about the size of the monkey puzzle trees and the box hedge. This puzzled me but I found out the answers. The holly hedge is still there and is on its third pruning. The box did not survive. As for the monkey puzzle trees this took longer to work out. There were three stumps in the side garden when we came here in 1950 which were always assumed to be cedar trees the same as the three still growing in the front garden (see photo). They were supposedly cut down because they made the house too dark. After a visit from June Ginger (nee Klitzing) and discussions with my brother Barry I discovered that the trees had very large cones which were considered dangerous by the Saunders and that the tree had suckers in 1950. I now believe the stumps to be Araucaria which is a strange tree with snake like branches covered with sharp scaly leaves. It is sometimes called a

monkey puzzle tree because its leaves make it difficult to climb.

Various families lived in the house and share farmed for George Appleyard. I believe at one stage the house was vacant when the property was leased to Bill Gunn who lived on Wilkur Creek across Canavans Rd. His pigs camped under the house and the next occupant had a problem with fleas.

George Saunders bought the property in 1945. As well as improvements to the farm he did renovations to the house. Much of the wallpaper was torn and possibly damp and this was mended with newspaper and kalsomine in various colours. In 1950 the big lounge room was in very good repair with wall paper done in huge panels. I am not sure whether the Saunders family replaced the earlier paper or it was left from earlier times because it was in good condition but maybe the room was little used.

"Hollyside"

This photograph was given to Pat Spinks by Mrs Margaret Thomas (nee Gunnensen) The Gunnensens owned the property from 1910 to 1920.

Plan of Hollyside drawn up when Pat and Jim were ordering the heating hence the size of the windows and the heights of the ceilings are included.

Guest Speaker

Terrance Bevington formally from Agnus near Welshpool spoke at the April meeting and gave us an insight into his life and his connection to South Gippsland. He was a merchant seaman and was given a job at Port Welshpool. He arrived in Melbourne and had a rail voucher for Welshpool which he assumed was near Melbourne. Unfortunately he missed the train and had to wait 24 hours to catch the next one. He still thought he was going to somewhere

Unfortunately George Saunders was murdered here in 1947 or 1948. He was shot by a young state ward who worked on the farm. Mrs Saunders left the farm and never returned, although her daughters Faye and Judith did visit. Rod and Merle Nicholson lived here and share farmed for Mrs Saunders until my father Don Shandley took over as share farmer in March 1950. Mrs Saunders had a stud herd of jersey cows and Dad managed these for her. In 1957 Mrs Saunders moved the stud herd to another property and sold the farm to my father. My parents lived here until 1990 when my father died and my mother built her house next to the homestead. My brother Barry bought half the property and I bought the other half. My husband Jim and I started renovating the house in 1991 when we had it rewired and restumped. It was a weekend job until Christmas 1998 when I moved here full time.

near Melbourne. At exactly 3 minutes to 6 pm the train left Flinders Street Station. At Dandenong he wondered why it was taking so long to get to Welshpool but the train went on. After several hours he arrived in Toora and was told Welshpool is next. Outside of Toora the train stopped and the guard came along and asked the passengers to help. The problem was cattle on the line and they had to be moved off. When he finally got to Welshpool the whole town was in darkness. Fortunately

for Terry, Bill Hendry came along in his car and took him to the hotel for the night. He could not get anything to eat though. Well Terry went out to work on the ships servicing the construction of the Bass Strait oil rigs. His wife joined him and the family enjoyed many happy years in the area.

Our new exhibition

On Mother's Day May 9th the new exhibition "**Women's white work - over the top in the twentieth century**" will be officially opened. The exhibition contains a large range of women's white work and embroidery as well as clothing, children's wear, dresses, hats, jewellery, china and home goods. The items date from the late 1700's to the 1970's and mostly belonged to local families. The opening will begin at 2.30 pm and a traditional afternoon tea

served in bone china will follow. The exhibition will be on display for 5 months and individuals and groups are most welcome to attend. Phone Lyn Skillern on 56686304 for further information. The museum is open on Thursdays and Fridays from 12 to 4 pm. Groups are welcome to arrange a time to visit.

Publications in the pipeline

John Murphy has completed a book on the Memorial Hall Leongatha and this will be launched later this year. Pat Spinks is working on a history of the Mt Eccles area.

School groups welcome

School groups studying local history or the use of historic evidence material are most welcome to visit our society. Guest speakers are also available. Contact Lyn Skillern 56686304

<p>Subscription \$15 Individual and \$20 per family Membership inquiries : contact the Secretary</p>

Photo 1 A post and rail fence

Photo 2 A picket fence to secure pigs.

"Hollyside"

This photograph was given to Pat Spinks by Mrs Margaret Thomas (nee Gunnensen) The Gunnensens owned the property from 1910 to 1920.

Plan of Hollyside drawn up when Pat and Jim were ordering the heating hence the size of the windows and the heights of the ceilings are included.

