

Leongatha and District Historical Society

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Newsletter

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The Launching of “The Meeting Place -The Leongatha Memorial Hall 1924-2004”

On Tuesday November 16th John Murphy's latest book was launched at the Leongatha Memorial Hall by Major General McLachlan President of the RSL. Earlier in the day John and Kath Murphy, together with Lola Bailey and Lyn Skillern, had enjoyed lunch at the RSL with Major General McLachlan and members of the Leongatha RSL. The Mayor, Heather Bligh, spoke about the hall and its importance and Cr Bob Newton presented the society with a gavel which was given to Brigadier General “Pompey” Elliott at the opening of the hall in 1926. Lola Bailey accepted the gavel on behalf of the Society and it is now on display in the foyer of the Mechanics' Institute. In his address to those present Major General McLachlan stressed the significance of the building to the community as a unique war memorial and a place to run all types of community events. John Murphy's speech was very well received as it contained many interesting stories about the hall and its part the lives of the people in Leongatha and the surrounding area. Following the launch a magnificent silent film was shown. This film was of the opening of the hall in 1926 and featured many notable citizens of the day. Present at the opening was Laurie Allen son of Grant Allen who was the first person to run the hall as a cinema and the maker of the historic film. Mr Allen was very pleased to see his father on the big screen after all these years. Following the film those present enjoyed an afternoon tea kindly provided by the local RSL Sub branch.

The Society would like to thank Kelvin John's Retravision for providing a DVD player to show the film at the opening and to Dick Lester for providing plants for the stage.

The Society Celebrates 40 years. On December 7th members met at the home of Kath and John Murphy to celebrate a most successful 2004. We enjoyed a meal of chicken, ham and salad followed by magnificent trifle, fruit tart and vanilla slices. Thank you to Kath and all the other members who provided the food. After the meal we watched a video of the opening of the Memorial Hall while Nance Symons gave an interesting commentary. She was able to recognise many people including her own father who sadly passed away in 1927. The Leongatha and District Historical Society had been formed in 1964 so the evening concluded

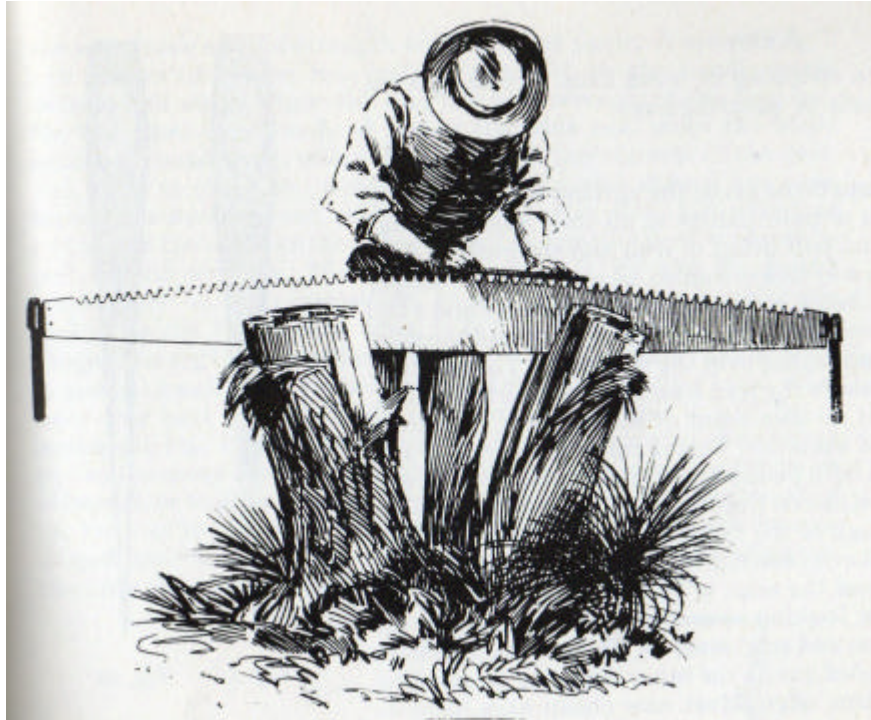
with the Society's first president John Murphy cutting the birthday cake made by Lyn Skillern.

Feature Articles

Tools of the Pioneers

By Ian Lester

Number 2 Saws



Across cut saw being sharpened

Saws for cutting timber were a most important tool for the settler. Timber cut with an axe does not have a square end which makes it unsuitable for building purposes whereas sawn ends are much more suitable.

The cross cut saw was the most versatile. There were a large range of sizes usually in 6 inch or 150mm increments. One man saws were from 3 to 5 feet long (.9 m to 1.5m) and two man saws were between 4 and 8 feet long (1.2m to 2.4m) with 6 feet (1.8m) being mostly used. The size of timber to be cut dictated the size of the saw. There were also a large range of tooth designs available, peg tooth, M tooth and peg and raker being most common. Some saws cut faster, others were easier to maintain. Ease of sharpening was important for the settler lacking the skill in this area.

A cross cut saw can be used to cut down a tree either on its own or in conjunction with an axe. When cutting the scarfe (V shaped notch) the bottom can be cut with the saw and the top with an axe or both cuts made with the saw, parallel to one another with the block split out with a wedge. When the back cut is done with a saw a wedge can be placed behind the saw to ensure the tree does not settle and jam the saw. (Lola's father). Once the tree has fallen the trunk can be cut into appropriate lengths to allow it to be handled or split/sawn into building material. Sometimes a trench would be required to allow the saw to cut through the log. Care was needed to prevent the kerf(cut) closing and jamming the saw. A wedge driven behind the

saw would help prevent this. Two skilled operators on a sharp cross cut saw are fairly efficient. Operators of a specially sharpened cross cut saw can compete with a chain saw. This had been shown in competitions.

The pit saw In the earliest days of settlement when transport problems were at their worst mill sawn timber was not available so all sawn timber was cut with a pit saw. Pit saw operation required the log to be elevated so that an operator could stand underneath it. This could be achieved with a hole (the pit) dug into the ground. The problem with this was the heavy rain would partially fill the hole adding to the discomfort of the bottom operator who also had to contend with a shower of saw dust. The preferred site was on a slope with a frame to support the log.

The saw was purpose built and cut on the downstroke only, usually about 6 feet (1.8m long). It was operated by two people often called the top dog and the under dog, they were probably part of a 4 to 6 member team and would take turns at operating the saw. The others would be taking logs to the saw and taking sawn timber away or resting. The top operator was responsible for the control of the saw and was probably follow a chalked line to ensure accuracy. The bottom operator pulled the saw down but took almost no role in its control as he stood in a constant shower of saw dust so had no chance to see what the saw was doing. A cape of some sort would be used to protect him from the saw dust. As well as working the saw up and down both operators applied pressure in the direction of travel to keep it cutting. Once the cut was started it proceeded until the first log support was reached. The bottom handle was then removed and the saw lifted out of the cut, the log was then moved lengthwise, the saw reinserted and cutting proceeded until the next support was reached, the process was then repeated. Once the cut was completed the log was turned and a second cut started. Four cuts were required to produce one piece of timber. Because of the labour intensive nature of pit sawing and its low productivity many settlers preferred to split building timber such as joists, studs, rafters, battens, weatherboards shingles etc if suitable free splitting timber was available.

Billet, Bow and Buck Saws These timber framed saws were used to cut timber across the grain. When cutting fire wood, pruning etc. The size of the timber to be cut was determined by the distance from the blade to the central strut about 7 to 8 inches. Blades were 27 inches long and held under tension by a turnbuckle opposite the blade, this tension also held the frame together. Saws of this type are still available but are made with steel frames where the spring in the frame tensions the blade. When cutting fire wood the saw was usually supported at a suitable height by a frame called a horse or buck.

Hand and Rip Saws When more sophisticated building materials became popular hand held saws were essential to achieve the accuracy required. The hand saw cut across the grain with 5 to 10 teeth in an inch (the more teeth to the inch the better the finish). Rip saws cut with the grain and had 3 to 5 teeth to the inc

The historic walk around the lanes of the Leongatha CBD

On Australia Day January 26th Geoff Michael lead a walk around the lanes of the Leongatha CBD. We started at Michael Place named after Geoff's Grandfather George Michael who was Shire Secretary and continued down Michael Place then to Stockyard Lane. We observed the oaks and peppercorn trees at the rear of what is now a car wash then proceeded down Pern Lane named after Dr Horace Pern. The next section of the tour took us back to McCartin St via Edney Lane and Sparrow Lane. We then moved down Bruce St to observe Lardner Place, named after the great surveyor, Gaudion Lane, Roberts Lane, Masonic Lane, Parish Lane and Bailey Lane. Our return walk took us to Canty Lane, Hyland Place, Lyon St and Goller Lane. Those present enjoyed a very pleasant lunch afterwards and we raised \$60 for the tsunami appeal. Thank you to Geoff and Joan Michael for their organization and the ladies who prepared lunch.

Coming Events

February 15th Dick Lester will lead us on a tour of some significant trees in the township of Leongatha. The tour will begin at the Mechanics' Institute at 6.30 pm and we will move around the sites by car. The meeting at the Mechanics' will follow the tour. Refreshments will be provided. Dick is very keen to discover more significant trees and preserve the ones we have. He will provide a free shrub to anyone who comes up with a genuine significant tree that has not yet been recorded.

March Special Exhibition The photographic exhibition “Nothing on a Plate” will be on display at the Mechanics’ Institute from March 1 until March 31st.

This exhibition celebrating women’s journey towards equality in Victoria 1901 to 2001 is a Union of Australian Women Centenary of Federation project. In 1901 women in Victoria lacked basic political, economic and civil rights. They could not vote or stand for any level of government. However, women’s struggle to improve their status, their journey to equality was underway. The photographs show women working towards improving their place in society as well as improving and helping society in general. Historian Morag Loh curator of the exhibition will be coming to speak at the Mechanics’ Institute on Monday March 14th at 6.30pm. Morag will speak about the exhibition, the lack a recognition women have had in history and the contribution women have made to our community in Victoria. School students and teachers are most welcome to attend.



Fun on the Farm. From The Worker, 12 October, 1911.

April Jillian Durance Jillian will be the guest speaker at our April 19th meeting. She will be speaking about her research into the Moyarra hall honour role. Jillian has spent a huge

amount of time researching the men from the Moyarra area who served in The Great War 1914 – 1918. Her research has even taken her to France. Jillian will tell us of her efforts and results.