



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Newsletter Volume 12 Number 3 August 2015

Preserving Our Heritage

President: Robert Sage
Secretary: Lyn Skillern Tel 56686304 mobile 0400249048
Tel: Society number: 56622492. The Society rooms are open
Thursdays and Fridays between 12 noon and 4pm
Email: leongathahistory@gmail.com
Website: www.leongathahistory.org.au
P O Box 431 Leongatha 3953

Latest News.

Anzac Day

A belated thankyou goes to Geoff Michael for his help during the Anzac Day celebrations. He was present throughout the day and it was lovely to see him back at the Society.

WW1 Exhibition

The WW1 exhibition continues with an inclusion of a new display featuring the Battles of Lone Pine and The Nek.

Come and find out more about some of the local men who served with the 8th Light Horse and fought and died in the trenches at Gallipoli.

The Great Kyogle Land Deal.

During the early 1900's Leongatha and District was going through a stage of growth and prosperity.

Land prices were rising in South Gippsland; progress had been made in clearing the massive amount of trees surrounding Leongatha and new buildings and residences had been erected quickly in the town over a period of a few months.

Dairying was considered a profitable industry with Butter factories in both Leongatha and Korumburra.

In contrast NSW and Northern Victoria was in a state of drought.

Stock agents of South Gippsland, such as William Hamilton and Co who held sales at stockyards in Leongatha fortnightly, were quick to transport trucks of cattle to the rich fertile lands of the area and within 6-12 months the stock were fattened enough for sale at market.



Arthur Champion Groom was a stock agent with Hamilton and Co.

In the early 1890's Arthur had joined the Parliament and won the seat of South Gippsland in the Legislative Assembly.

Through a contact in Parliament, Arthur was told of the rich land at Kyogle on the Richmond River in NSW and its potential for dairying.

While at one of the fortnightly stock sales held at the Leongatha saleyards, Arthur encouraged a number of local farmers to go and inspect the property.

After a 3 ½ day visit the farmers returned to Leongatha and at a meeting decided to form a Syndicate with the idea of purchasing this land for the purpose of Closer Settlement. The price was £3 7s 6d per acre and the company formed with 10 000 shares payable at £10 each. In the end only 8 200 shares were allotted and only called up to £4/10 per share which raised some good financing.

Members of the Syndicate included around 55 men from Gippsland. Some of these were: W. J Williams, and R. N and F. J Scott of Kongwak; Arthur C Groom, John and Robert Smith, Phil Bellingham, W. Irving, the Allison Brothers, Alex Beatty and R. de C. Shaw all of Leongatha; John Cooke and Peter Neilson of Poowong; Alex Suding of Loch; William Allen of Mirboo North; John Twyford of Arawata; James Cashin of Tarwin Lower; James Chapman of Bena and H. P Winter Cooke of Korumburra.



The purchase of the Kyogle Estate was finalised by late October 1903 for the amount of £200 000.

The Estate consisted of 41 053 acres with up to 10 000 cattle and was 15 miles from Casino. It was full of undulating land and rich flats along the river. It was lightly timbered and there were running streams every mile or two which overflowed. The mild climate and fertility of the soil were perfect for dairying and growing crops all year round; and was some of the finest in Australia.

The land was sub divided into smaller dairy farms of between 50 and 400 acres. Bridges were built, roads made and the township of Kyogle was surveyed in the centre of the estate.

Blocks would be put up for auction where members of the syndicate could purchase them alongside other interested buyers.

The first subdivision of 20, 000 acres were auctioned off at the School of Arts in Casino in November 1903. 350-400 people attended from all over the state including a large number of Victorians.

R. N Scott purchased Lot 19 of 137 ½ acres and A. Beatty made 4 purchases; Lot 34 of 113 acres, Lot 36 of 103 ¼ acres, Lot 37 of 97 ½ acres and Lot 44 of 104 ¾ acres.

Progress on the land continued and to meet the needs of the settlers a number of businesses had opened. A blacksmiths shop, the Bank of New South Wales, some hotels, two churches, a creamery, a sawmill and a post and telegraph office. A Butter and Bacon factory was also erected to deal with the supplies from the dairy farms.

The second subdivision of a further 20 000 acres were put up for action in October 1904 at Kyogle outside the main homestead of the original estate.

This sale was less of a success but all lots that were sold were done so at a fair price and amounted to £34 259, 17s, 6d averaging £6 per acre.

The following day the town blocks were put up for sale. Even with the rain the masses of people returned and this time every one of the 264 blocks found a buyer.

Prices ranged from £9 to £160, making a total of £6890.

Kyogle was no longer a village and was soon to be classed as one of the most successful towns in the Northern River District of New South Wales.

Because of the vision and enterprise of a group of South Gippsland farmers the land of Kyogle is what it is today.

What a profitable venture that market day at the Leongatha stockyards turned out to be!!

Battle at the Nek - August 7th 1915, a dreadful day for Leongatha and District.

By Lyn Skillern

One cannot look at the photographs of the young men who died at "The Nek" on August 7th 1915 without a feeling of great sadness. This Gallipoli battle was ill conceived and totally pointless, yet seven local men were killed on that day. One other died of wounds as a result of the action. The 8th Light Horse was virtually wiped out. One hundred years on we can at least remember their names and in most cases their faces. We are so fortunate to have photographs of five of the seven

A brigade of Light Horse consisting of the 8th, 9th and 10th battalions were sent to Gallipoli as reinforcements because the casualty rate was so high. They fought as infantry in those rough gullies and on those ridges.

Those men of the 8th Light Horse were simply young men from rural communities Ernie Barton, aged 30, and Tom Murray, aged 24, were from Buffalo and well known in the community. They enlisted in Meeniyah in November 1914. They were ready for the great adventure. Robert Beilby, aged 23, was from Leongatha South and he enlisted in Leongatha very early in the war on August 31st 1914. Michael Edward Larkin was 25 and the son of Michael Larkin of Tarwin Meadows. He enlisted in Casterton where he was working on December 1st 1914. Oscar John Matthies of Koorooman East was 24 when he enlisted in Leongatha on December 8th 1914. Morton Cakebread, a local boundary rider, was 19 when he enlisted at Broadmeadows in February 1915. Robert Beilby and Morton Cakebread travelled together to Egypt on *HMAT The Star of Victoria*. Oscar Matthies and Ernie Barton travelled on *HMAT Palermo*. Ed Larkin and Tom Murray were together on *HMAT Pera*

Ernie Barton, Tom Murray and another trooper Dick Hobley travelled to Gallipoli on May 16th and saw action there for some time. Ernie and Dick were suffering from dysentery and spent several days in hospital on Lemnos. Ernie returned to Gallipoli on July 25th, just in time for the attack on August 7th. Dick Hobley was too ill and remained in hospital thus missing the attack. Imagine hearing the news of the loss of your mates. Dick was returned to Egypt and later fought with the Light Horse in Palestine. He was sadly killed in action and buried in the Jerusalem Military Cemetery.

Edward Kneale, aged 22, who grew up in the Leongatha area was in the 14th Battalion. He was also killed in action on August 7th at "The Nek". Edwin Tompkins of Meeniyah was in the 8th Battalion. He was seriously wounded on August 7th and transferred to London where he died on August 16th.

One very fortunate man was Les Hogan of Mt Eccles who was in the 9th Light Horse. He was lined up ready to go over the top and run towards the Turkish machine guns when the attack was called off. He became a Lieutenant, survived the whole war from 1914

until 1919, returned to Australia and raised a family. He has a number of descendants in the local area today.

Please spare a thought for these young men and visit the Leongatha Historical Society's display on World War 1, which includes 60 photographs of local men who lost their lives and special items on the men of the 8th Light Horse.



Ernie Barton



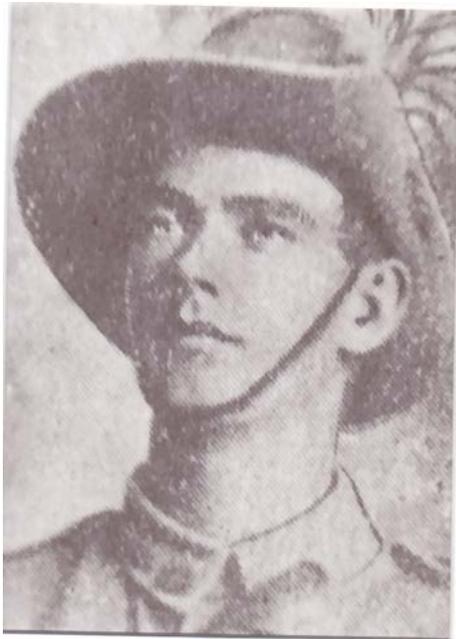
Michael Edward Larkin



Oscar Matthies



Robert Beilby



Tom Murray

Coming Events

Daffodil Festival

The Festival this year celebrates the theme “Daffodils are Spring” and will be held on Friday the 11th, Saturday the 12th and Sunday the 13th of September.

The Historical Society will be opening their doors:

Friday 11am – 4pm

Saturday 10am – 3pm

Sunday 11am – 3pm

Shingler Memorial Dinner and Lecture

The dinner will be held on Saturday the 24th of October at the Dakers Centre. Doors open at 6.30pm for a 7pm start.

This year the Speaker will be Dr Michael Bourke and he will be giving a talk about 50 years of Medicine.

The entertainment will be provided by Patrick Lanagan with some musical accompaniment.

Tickets will be available soon at the Mechanical Institute on Thursdays and Fridays between 12 and 4pm for \$35 each.

BYO Drinks.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM this year will be held at 7.30pm on the 9th September.

We will have speaker David Shambrook who will talk about his trip to Gallipoli.