



# Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

*Newsletter*

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*Preserving Our Heritage*

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## **Help us stay open**

We are in great need of help from our members. We need your support to stay open on Thursdays and Fridays. A few hours of your time once a month would be most welcome. Thank you to Joan Michael, Sonya Holt and Jeanette Chalmers for volunteering. Can anyone out there type onto a computer, a typist is needed to work on a family history for one of our members

## **Filming Lennie's Ride.**

Being proactive the Society sent a copy of *Lennie's Ride* to former Leongatha resident Fiona Eagger. Fiona is the daughter of noted local doctor the late Ron Eagger and is the producer of the *Miss Fisher Murder Mysteries* which have been running on television in recent weeks. She is away at present but will read the story on her return and get back to us. It is a start.

## **Heating the Mechanics' Institute.**

We received a Shire grant and are currently organising the installation of two gas heaters. After 28 years we deserve better heating. The gas has been connected and we will soon have the heaters. The heaters will be in front of the fireplaces and this will involve some rearranging of the displays and the archives.

## **Our own container**

The Society has purchased a shipping container to be used as a storage facility. It is numbered 99 on the catalogue. The container is now residing in a shed at the home of Robert and Ruth Sage. Robert has kindly offered to store the container in a safe dry place and we are currently working out what will go into it. Obviously only certain items can go into a container but we will be able to reduce the clutter some what especially as we have to make space for our much needed heaters

**Sister Potter** The memorial to Sister Potter is finally a reality. Merv Mee has organised the installation of the plaque and the unveiling will be on June 7<sup>th</sup> at 11 am in front of the IGA supermarket.



### **The Leongatha Secondary College Centenary Reunion**

The event was huge. More than 4000 people attended the centenary reunion at the Leongatha Secondary College on April 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. The ECA Centre was full to capacity for the book launch at 11 am and the High School Assembly at 12. Over at the former Tech School a large crowd gathered for the Tech assembly. The founding Principal of Leongatha Tech School, Bill Johnson, spoke to the assembled group of past students, staff, parents and friends. It was wonderful to see him there 45 years after he first set up the school in portables on the edge of the old high school pony paddock. The display was well received and many past students enjoyed looking around the trade wing and talking with current teachers. Over in the ECA Centre those attending the gathering enjoyed the displays chatted and met up with friends. The book on the school history sold out by 1 pm and a second printing had to be ordered.

At Mesley Hall a magnificent heritage display was opened by John Murphy and Lyn Skillern. This display of photographs shows major events in the school's history. The Visual Honour Roll has been relocated to the Mesley Hall foyer and looks great in its new home. This honour roll remembers past students who were killed in wartime. Each serviceman has a presentation with a photograph and a piece of text. New Trotman and Nicholas memorials are part of this heritage display.

In the evening two functions were held. A wonderful dinner, with a number of highlights, was held in the Memorial Hall. The sons of past student, Rear Admiral Jack Mesley (son of school founder Arthur Mesley), presented current Principal Brett Windsor with the Admiral's dress sword. One current student, Charlotte Brew and two past students, Elly Poletti and Josh Gardiner, performed and stunned the audience with their talent. Professor Ivan Caple spoke enthusiastically and with fondness about his old school and proposed a toast to the past. Former Tech Principal Irving Stephens responded to the toast and Brett Windsor proposed a toast to the future. At Mesley Hall the Great Centenary Cabaret was held and this was enjoyed by around 400 people. Many groups of students had their photos taken and they enjoyed being with friends from past times. The dancing and socializing went on to the small hours.

Sunday saw the Leongatha Secondary College assembly and the music event. There was a wonderful final assembly with Auld Lang Syne and this was followed by the re burial of the time capsule to be opened in 2037 when the school is 125. Everyone who attended enjoyed themselves and had a wonderful time



**Anne Garrett (nee Mesley) and Roma Jenkins (nee Bull) enjoy a laugh at the centenary dinner. They attended teachers college together.**

Anne who is Arthur Mesley's only surviving child enjoyed herself immensely. Another person she chatted to was Mavis Wightman (nee Maxwell) with whom she attended both primary and secondary school

**Below is a photo of a group of Leongatha High School girls in front of the school in the 50s. Photo from Margaret Kuhne**



**The centenary book *From Inkwell to Internet* is available from the Society for \$40 plus postage**

**The South Gippsland Jersey Breeders Club Centenary.**

Arthur Mesley the founder of Leongatha High School was an agricultural scientist and a great supporter of the Jersey breed. He convened the meeting that set up the South Gippsland Jersey Breeders Club in 1912. The purpose of the club was to promote Jersey interests in the area. The Leongatha Agricultural High School had prize winning Jersey cattle and the last herd was sold in 1930.



**The Leongatha Agricultural High School Jersey herd 1929 (from the Weekly Times)**



**A Jersey sale in Leongatha 1929 (from the Weekly Times)**

## **The Centenary of the Leongatha Mechanics' Institute**

This year marks the centenary of our own building. To celebrate our president John Hyett will present a Magic Lantern Show.

Our building is the second Mechanics' Institute in Leongatha. The original building was located on the site of the Memorial Hall. In 1895 a Magic Lantern show was held in the original hall and the main subject was the Sudan War. A small contingent from New South Wales went to this war. John Hyett has been able to acquire some slides of the Sudan War and they will form part of the show.

The Magic Lantern Show will be held in Meeting Room 1 at the Memorial Hall on August 4<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 8 pm. The Mechanics Institute will be opened from 7 pm for people to look at the building and find out more about it. The charge for the evening will be \$10 and booking is essential as seating is limited. Please contact Lyn on 56686304 or the Society 56622492.



**The front room of the Leongatha Mechanics' Institute in the 1990s. The superb ceiling is clearly shown.**

