



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

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Preserving Our Heritage

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The latest news

• **We have a new President.** Jennifer Hamilton will take over from Ian Lester as our President. All other positions remain the same. Thank you to Ian Lester for his fine work as President for the past two years

• **Tullaree visit in May.** A very good day was had when a group of our members travelled to *Tullaree* to see over the historic home. Thank you to Tim and Janet McCrae for opening their home to us

• **Daffodil Festival August 26th, 27th, and 28th.** Our Daffodil Festival display will feature antique items from our own collection and collections of eggcups, moustache cups, and thimbles on loan from some of our members. As a special event on Saturday afternoon we will have our own **Antique Road Show**. Bring along items to be valued by Simon Ford of Inverloch. A gold coin donation per item will be the cost involved and the valuations will start at 1.15 pm.

• **The Shingler Memorial Lecture**

On Saturday July 17th over 100 people gathered in the Dakkers Centre for The Shingler Memorial Lecture and Dinner. Young singer Elli Poleti who impressed the audience with her fine singing entertained those present. Carmel Slater accompanied Elli on the piano. Wal Cayzer was, as usual, an entertaining MC. Speaker Cheryl Glowrey gave a very interesting presentation on an expedition made in the 1840s to try and find a coastal route into Gippsland. At the time there was a settlement at Port Albert and a road into Gippsland did not exist. This expedition started in July and found the weather a huge problem. The party suffered badly from wet and cold, a shortage of food and slow progress due to dense vegetation. None of us present would contemplate such a journey at this time of year. Cheryl described the methods used to get drays and cattle across the Tarwin River near Tarwin Lower where it is at one of its widest points. I felt I could see that scene where cattle were drowning and calves were being taken by sharks. The expedition members finally made it to the end point but the efforts to find a coastal route were abandoned and we all can understand why. Thank you to the committee who organised the evening and all who contributed. Well done to Geoff Michael, Margaret Stokes, Wal

Cayzer, Rob Williams, Ian Lester, Lola Bailey, Joan Michael, Pat Spinks and Jennifer Hamilton. To Jennifer and Margaret a special thanks for their excellent savouries and slices.

• **The 2/22 battalion Lark Force**

Lyn Skillern was very thrilled to hear from members of the 2/22nd Battalion Remembrance Group that she was mentioned in Federal Parliament. The member for Greenway in Queensland Mrs Markus quoted from the articles Lyn had written about the men from our area lost in 1942 when Rabaul was over run by the Japanese.

**Feature Article By Lyn Skillern
From *the Great Southern Star***

I have been working on the history of Leongatha Secondary College for the centenary in 2012 and this has meant reading many editions of *The Star*. I thought our members might enjoy some of the articles I discovered.

In 1968 *The Star* cost 5c and it was very interesting to see the following headline

“GATHA NURSING SISTER VOLUNTEERS FOR BIAFRA.” A photograph of our very own Sybil Smith accompanied this. This brought back memories for me. I remember walking for Biafra and raising money. I cannot remember where we started. Monash University organized the event and we walked into the city for a rally. I do remember it being a very long way. Sybil saw a need and decided to use her special skills to help. When asked why she volunteered for six months, her reply was “I feel there is such a lot to be done to help the war refugees and starving people of Biafra” Sybil was to be part of the first Socio-medical team arranged through the World Council of Churches, in association with the International Red Cross. Sybil, who was educated at Leongatha High, and did her nursing training at the Alfred and Women’s hospitals, first felt there was a need to help the unfortunate people of the world when she went to Singapore in 1966 and later read of the problems in Vietnamese refugee camps. She volunteered through the World Council of Churches to go and work in Vietnam. Her application was filed and she was told that they were recruiting Asian nurses. She heard nothing of the helping scheme until she was approached by Rev Brian Walsh of the World Council of Churches and asked if she was available to go to Biafra. She flew to Sydney for an interview and was selected from a group of nine applicants



Sybil Smith 1968

Billiards In 1945 *The Star* was 3d. The paper had actually declined in price from 1945 to 1968. The following article describes a visit to the area by billiard genius Walter Lindrum and his assistance in raising funds for the Bush Nursing Hospital

“When the president of the Woorayl Shire Bush Nursing Hospital, Cr H P Williams, obtained information that Mr Lindrum, the billiards champion, intended visiting friends in Meeniyan during the holidays, he at once saw the opportunity to raise funds for the hospital site that was recently purchased in Leongatha. Mr Lindrum was communicated with to give an exhibition and it was a fine gesture on his part to accede to the request.

Exhibitions of billiards and snooker were given at Meeniyan and Leongatha and the many spectators enjoyed the skilled and manner in which the champion handled the cue. They also realised they were assisting a deserving institution as well as well as having a class of enjoyment not often obtainable in the country. The receipts at Meeniyan were £20/15/6 and Leongatha £13/17/6. A crazy ball competition was won by Gilbert Devery in Meeniyan and Colin Bailey in Leongatha. Both received a cue presented by the champion billiard player.”



Our Ian Lester looking young in 1965

Workroom News by Pat Spinks

The Cataloguing Team continues to meet on most Tuesdays in the work room. Some days have had to be cancelled because of sickness or clashing workshops and meetings but we are pressing on with the cataloguing of the files about local schools.

Daffodil festival preparation is well underway and we are planning to start dismantling the “Weddings are

Timeless” display on Saturday August 15th and putting the items away in their correct locations. As this is done we will start work on the “Antiques and Collectables” display for the Daffodil Festival. We have less than 2 weeks to get it done and anyone who is able to help would be very welcome. All those wedding dresses (apart from the two on loan) will have to be carefully folded in tissue paper and stored in the appropriate fabric box or trunk. We haven’t formed an **Exhibitions Team** yet so how about some volunteers? Come along, have a laugh and join in the fun.

Some of our display will consist of members collections loaned for the Daffodil Festival Display and the owners will arrange these.



WILD DOG VALLEY SCHOOL .. 1932

BACK : Mary Anderson, Mary Tieman, Mavis McKean, Doreen McKean,
Edith Scott, Edna Nicholson, Heather McKean.

MIDDLE : Norman Calder, John Nicholson, Alan Nicholson,
Stan Tieman, Roland Scott.

FRONT : Neil Scott, Geoff Jenkin, Rodney Nicholson, James Tieman, Frank Nicholson

It is planned to use our mannequins and dressmaker models to display some of our “antique” garments and these will have to be unpacked, possibly ironed and a model found to fit. We may use some of our Christening robes for the display along with other infant and children’s garments. We have some interesting lady’s bonnets, which may also be featured. Planning is still underway. As the display takes place the captions for each item will need to be printed and mounted.

The hallway is to be used for a **School Timeline** showing the opening and closing of schools within our collection area (the old Woorayl Shire). For this we will need the dates of opening and closure, number and name of the school (with any name changes). Some details are available from previous research by members and Lola is working her way through “Vision and Realization” to obtain details of other schools. I would greatly appreciate a telephone call from anyone who has details on these schools from research they have done. Most of the schools north of Leongatha in the old Woorayl Shire are covered by information collected already. Schools that closed after about 1969 are not covered in “V & R”.

The display boards in the hallway will be used to display photographs of some of the schools and schoolbooks will be displayed in the hall cabinets. These will also need captions.

On the Saturday afternoon of the Daffodil Festival the Historical Society is holding an “Antique Roadshow” for members of the public who would like to bring along articles to be identified and/or valued. Charge will be a gold coin per item.

Anyone who is able to help with school information or can join the Exhibition Team for a day or two or three please contact Pat Spinks on 5668 6365 or at the rooms on Thursday afternoons on 5662 2492. Please leave a message if you don't get an answer and I will ring you back or e-mail me on pspinks@wideband.net.au or the Hist. Soc on vnghissoc@aussiebroadband.com.au or leongathahistsoc@yahoo.com.au



Inside Leongatha, State School 1908

Schools for all after 1872

Following the Education Act of 1872 an Education Department was established in Victoria and education was Free, Secular and Compulsory. This meant that the Victorian Government set up schools for all children to attend until they were 14. In pioneer areas such as Leongatha and District the setting up of schools was not a simple process. Communities had to push for schools to be built and even provide the land. Many of these schools were often not very good places to learn. The first Leongatha State School was a slab building with an earthen floor and no windows. The leaving age was not always followed and many schools were only open for half a week. The pupil teacher system meant that young people could start teaching at the age of 14 as long as they had a merit certificate (Year 8). They gained teaching skills on the job. By 1900 teacher training had improved and junior teachers had to complete more education themselves before they could be appointed to a school. In 1905 the Victorian government started to consider going into secondary education. This was controversial as the private schools thought secondary education was their area and they did not want the State to compete with them. Agricultural High Schools were established in rural areas and between 1907 and 1912 three were built in Gippsland. These were in Sale 1907, Warragul 1911 and Leongatha in 1912. The establishing of Leongatha High School did not come easily and the community had to contribute to the cost of the building in order to get a school. The land came from the Labour Colony and this had two affects. Firstly the Education Department did not have to buy the land and secondly the school was a long way out of town. By the First World War children in our area had the chance to go to a primary and secondary school relatively close to their homes.

Do you know?

We need to find the dates for the closure of some schools in the area for our Daffodil Festival Timeline
Mardan 2516
Dumbalk North 2945

Nerrena 3395
Dumbalk 3415
Dollar 3473
Milford 3565
Stony Creek 3665
Leongatha East 4505



The 1954 buildings at Leongatha High being demolished in 2007

The Koorooman East Avenue of Honour

A meeting was held on July 21st at the RSL to discuss the restoration of the Koorooman East Avenue of Honour. This avenue is located on Hyde's Road Koorooman East. It was planted to remember the men from that area who served in The Great War and was planted in 1918. The trees need some work done on them and a plaque, listing the names of these 36 young men, is required. It was good to have some members of the public attend the meeting and start working towards achieving the goal. Well done to Ian Lester for starting the process. The next meeting on this issue will be held on Monday August 16th at the Mechanics' Institute at 7.30 pm.

Lennie's Ride Mary Small of Sydney has written a children's book about how the young Lennie Gwyther's rode his pony *Ginger Mick* to Sydney for the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Lennie was only nine years old when he rode the 600 miles from Leongatha to Sydney in 1932. This book will be launched on Saturday September 4th at 2 pm at the Leongatha Mechanics' Institute. Please come along, meet Mary Small, and be part of the event. Members are asked to bring a plate for the afternoon tea.

We need you !!!. Your historical society needs your help. We cannot continue to open on Thursdays and Fridays without some more support. Please give us some of your time. We also need people to help for the Daffodil Festival on August 26th, 27th and 28th

