



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Preserving Our Heritage

Newsletter

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Latest News

New Treasurer

At the last Annual Meeting in September Alan McGuinness was elected Treasurer. We thank former treasurer Pat Spinks for her service to the Society in this role.

Life Membership for Pat Spinks. It was our Society's great pleasure to bestow a Life Membership on Pat at the Annual Meeting in September. She was very surprised and thrilled to receive the much-deserved award.

Christmas end of year celebration

This year we will be holding our end of year celebration on Saturday December 1st.at 12.30. Deb Moloney has kindly offered her home at 26 Ogilvy St as the venue. Deb lives in the noted local house that once belonged to the Knight family. We will have a lunch as usual and members are asked to bring a salad, cold meat or a sweet. Please let Deb know what you are bringing for catering purposes. Deb's number is 0429110557, DYO drinks

New displays When we take down the World War I photographs in the hallway it is hoped to set up a display of the streetscape of McCartin Street and maybe Bair St. Also on display will be information about the wreck of The Magnet at Venus Bay in 1900. The display in the front room will be on football in the area highlighting new items donated by the Howard family

The End of The Great War

The Great War officially ended on November 11th 1918. Action on the Western Front in France ceased. The people of Leongatha and District were excited and relieved. Their boys would be coming home; many had been away for more than four years. Sadly of the approximately 500 men to enlist from the former Woorayl Shire 160 had died or returned home and died shortly afterwards. Our three nurses returned safely.

This photo was taken in front of the Woorayl Shire Offices on November 12th 1918 at the event officially celebrating War's end



Celebrations were held all over the country. Avenues of Honour were planted to remember the men and women who served and halls, schools and churches had honour boards made.

The men started to return home in 1919, for some the war was over for more than a year before they returned. We had some sad stories associated with the returning men. George (Harry) Howard died shortly after his return to his wife and family. William Kelley was accidentally shot and killed while rabbiting after coming back to Leongatha. Both Harry and William have war graves in the Leongatha Cemetery. Seriously wounded Light horseman Robert Banks returned from Syria but died of wounds in Caulfield hospital. He is also buried in the Leongatha Cemetery. Horace Bair survived the fighting but was very ill. He lived until 1926. Others on the Memorial Hall Honour Roll to die of war related illness after the war ended are Oswald Sagassar, Even Munro and Ivan Hughes.

For many returning home was difficult, they had seen too much and fitting into civilian life was not easy. A number of returned soldiers came to live in the Leongatha district after the war. Dr Horace Pern took up a medical practice in the town in 1919. He was a friend to former soldiers and their families and served the area well until his death in 1937. Harris Gollar came to the town and set up his saddlery. Both men were instrumental in setting up the RSL in Leongatha in January 1919. Other men came to the area, as soldier settlers amongst these were Chris Christoffersen of Nerrena and John Cummins of Leongatha South.

Ghost Signs by Lyn Skillern

What is a ghost sign? Ghost signs are old business or public signs on buildings and fences that are basically advertising for local businesses and facilities. They are called ghost signs because the items advertised no longer exist.



If you are in the Woolworth's petrol station you can see the sign shown above. Stokes Auto Electrics is no longer in business but this sign is still there. Jim and Margaret Stokes ran their business from a premises in Michael Place from 1974/5 until 1988/9.

This sign in Meeniyan is for Schweppes and Aygee soft drinks. It is Aygee that has not been around for many years



If you stand on the railway station and look towards Bair St you can see the back of the building that was once the Supervalu supermarket run by the Naudi and Popples families in the 70s and early 80s. The other ghost sign is for The Commercial Bank of Australia that was once in Bair St.



If anyone knows of other ghost signs please let us know

The story of hydro electricity on the Franklin River at Toora

In October we joined the South Gippsland Genealogical Society to enjoy a guest speaker. Neil Everitt who has written several histories about the Toora and Foster area. He spoke about the subject of his latest book, the hydro electricity plant on the Franklin River. Neil entertained us with the story of the river and how Toora became the first community in Victoria to have its street and house lighting provided by hydroelectric power. This power station supplied Toora and Foster from 1916 to 1938. There was mixed success with power supplies and the intermittent flow of the river in dry seasons and in 1938 the SEC supply was connected to the area. Neil made the point that Toora had renewable energy 100 years ago and with the setting up of the wind farm in 2002 continues to have renewable energy. His book *The Power of Water* is well worth a read.

1932 Kingsford-Smith comes to Leongatha

LaTrobe Valley was all abuzz with excitement when Air-Commodore Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith flew in with his famed Southern Cross Plane.

He was fundraising for his next overseas trip by taking passengers on scenic air flights around their district. The Southern Cross could take 16 passengers at a time, and he also had a smaller plane that could seat 12 passengers (for a cheaper fare).

On Saturday, 29 October 1932, he landed at Morwell, then on Sunday he came to Leongatha. He travelled to Traralgon on Wednesday and then on to Heyfield on Thursday.

Smithy was welcomed and celebrated at all venues by Returned Soldiers and officials of the towns. When he landed at Steele's Hill in Leongatha he was greeted by an estimate of more than 1000 people. As this was Melbourne Cup time, he flew back to Essendon airport on the Monday with a group of local Leongatha racing enthusiasts to see Peter Pan win the 1932 Cup, and then flew them back again on Wednesday morning.

Whilst at Traralgon he set a world record by having the oldest ever airline passenger, Mrs. Harriet Scarffe, who was one month short of her 108th birthday.

Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith was tragically lost at sea 3 years later, on 8th November 1935, during a flight from India to Singapore.

Joy Edney has provided us with some excellent photographs in relation to Kingsford Smiths visit

Kingsford Smith in Leongatha



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Nov 1st 1932

PAYING A FLYING VISIT to Melbourne for the Cup, Air Commodore Sir Charles Kingsford Smith (right) brought six passengers from Leongatha by air yesterday to Essendon.

The Melbourne Cup visitors

Planning for 2019

At the November meeting we will be planning 2019. We need speaker suggestions and ideas for possible event. After two successful joint meetings with the SGGS we plan to organise one or two similar meetings next year with a good speaker. We also need an Anzac speaker for our special Anzac dinner or lunch. New fund raising ideas will be most welcome.

Bob Barguss

Recently a photo of Bob Barguss of Koonwarra was placed on our Facebook page. Ceremonies were being held to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the completion of the infamous Burma railway and it was appropriate to post photos of Bob Barguss and also Jim Mitchell who both died on the railway. Bill Jackson kindly posted a photo of Bob's wedding. He married Helena Mae Goodwill in 1933. He also provided us with a copy of research carried out on Bob's life. Thank you Bill.



Bob's story from his niece June Harvey

Robert William Barguss was born on 21 February 1905 at Besseleigh, Wiltshire, England to William Andrew Barguss, an insurance agent and his wife Sarah Groom. He was the eldest of three children born to this couple, having two younger siblings Edward and Frances.

He emigrated to Australia at the age of 20 in 1925 on board the "*Jervis Bay*" leaving London on 3 November 1925. He was living at 89 Oak Street, Alphington and his occupation was boot maker.

On 27 April 1933 he married my Aunt, Helena May Goodwill (known as May) at the Collins Street Baptist Church in Melbourne.

At the time of his wedding Bob was share farming at McKinnon's Post Office, near Leongatha. After their marriage he and May ran a dairy farm between Caithness and Minns Roads Koonwarra, known in those days as Bunkers Hill.

Bob had been active in the local militia unit where he had risen to the rank of Company Quarter Master Sergeant. The Militia was an interest he had followed in England. He enlisted in the AIF at Royal Park on 26 May 1941. After his basic training in the Bendigo area, he was appointed to the 13 AGH (Australian General Hospital) unit and left for Singapore on the HMAWS "*Wanganella*" where he was stationed by September 1941.

He was taken prisoner by the Japanese at the fall of Singapore on 14 February 1942 and after some time in Changi Prison at Singapore he went to the Burma end to work on the Burma Railway until his death from beri beri (result of Malnutrition) on 12 January 1944 at Tanbaya Hospital, Burma. His remains are buried in the Thanbyuzayat Cemetery Burma.

More than 50 years with the RHSV

Recently we received this invitation from the Royal Historical Society of Victoria inviting us to celebrate more than 50 years as members.

LEONGATHA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Congratulations! Your society has been a member
of the RHSV since 01/01/1964,
more than 50 years!
And we think that is worth celebrating.

The President, Don Garden, & Councillors
of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria
invite two representatives from
LEONGATHA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
to join us
in celebrating your half century of membership
on Tuesday 13 November from 10:30am
for a champagne morning tea