



# Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Preserving Our Heritage

*Newsletter*      Volume 14 Number 2 May 2017

**President:** Robert Sage

**Secretary:** Lyn Skillern    Tel 56686304 Mobile 0400249048

**Society rooms number:** 56622492

**The Society rooms are open Thursdays and Fridays between 12 & 4pm**

**Email:**      leongathahistory@gmail.com

**Website:**    [www.leongathahistory.org.au](http://www.leongathahistory.org.au)

**PO Box 431 Leongatha 3953**

## Latest News

• **A new computer** The Society has purchased a new computer as the old one was not working properly. Computers age quickly and the programs needed for cataloguing and recording all our information require updating. Our records are now on the new computer and working very well.

• **Do you know anything about? We have had requests for information on the following subjects?**

1. Frank Bransby Milnes who farmed at Mardan
2. Henry Atkin and his wife Harriett. Henry died on December 11<sup>th</sup> 1921 aged 64. Harriett died on September 8<sup>th</sup> 1948 aged 89.
3. Dick Stockdale
4. John Neilson, the father of poet John Shaw Neilson, who died in Leongatha in 1921 and is buried in our cemetery

• **A Pig Net**

The Society has acquired a pig net from Barry Sbandley. This net was used to take pigs to market in a spring cart. The net covered the pigs and kept them securely in the cart. Many farms raised pigs and they were taken to market by spring cart or on foot. The McAlpine family of Trida used to drive pigs to the railway station at Ruby via Wild Dog Valley. On one notable occasion the pigs got away and the five Calder boys came and helped round them all up, not an easy task. Most farms raised pigs, as they were able to feed them on the skim milk left on the farm at a time when the butter factories collected cream only. The pigs were often sold to Dandy Hams. This company had a factory in Dandenong near the railway yards. There was a large area of land near the railway at Dandenong where livestock was kept after coming in from Gippsland by rail.

## **The Dodd Slides and the story of Grayson Dodd 1882-1964**

**By Lyn Skillern**

The Society was very excited when Allen Riseley brought in a CD with the famous Dodd slides on it. Grayson Dodd was a very keen photographer who recorded on glass slides the original forest in the Dumbalk North area, the clearing of the family selection and the establishing of a fully functioning dairy farm. We had seen the slides before many years ago but only have a few of the photographs in our collection. A number of these glass slides were used in a book called "The Mountain Forests of Gippsland" by Phyllis Reicl to illustrate what happened to the wonderful South Gippsland forests. We had made copies of these to use in our pioneer kit, which is available on our website.

Frank Dodd, Grayson's father, and family were living in Echuca and wanted to move to somewhere with a cooler climate. In Christmas week 1877 Frank Dodd came to Moe. He engaged John Gallagher to show him the land. They reached the Tarwin River by January 1<sup>st</sup> 1878 and Mr Dodd pegged out 320 acres, which he then selected. The following September he cut scrub then returned to Echuca for Christmas.

Frank described the forestland he had selected. 'The blackbutt trees (Mountain Ash or Eucalyptus Regnans) ran up to a height of 300 feet, the blackwood trees 90 to 100 feet and the musk, hazel, pittosporum, blanket wood, jeal wood and several kinds of myrtle, with supplejack and the lovely ferns all combined to make up a dense mass of undergrowth, very hard to penetrate, and one could easily lose their bearings in such a jungle'. **From Land of the Lyrebird**

After the family had cleared some land and made provision for a house Mrs Dodd and the rest of the Dodd family came permanently into the area



Cutting timber in the forest by Grayson Dodd



Grayson Dodd was born in 1882 in the home on the property he subsequently owned. He lived his life on that property at Dumbalk North. As a young boy he developed a keen interest in photography and for this we are eternally grateful.

Commencing his hobby with a simple box Brownie camera, Grayson set about capturing the scenery that surrounded his home on the banks of the Tarwin River's East branch.

The first stages of forest clearing were recorded, then the burning process, the planting of grasses and the gradual change of the area from dense forest to ordered farmland. All this illustrated by Grayson's wonderful photographs taken on plate glass negatives that he developed himself. The photographs record the living conditions of our pioneers and the enormous task they undertook to clear the land with only saws and axes.

The Dodd's were leaders in the temperance movement and the Methodist Church. In June 1914 Grayson married Gertrude Trease a member of another pioneering family in the Tarwin Valley. The Dodd family were active in the formation and running of the Dumbalk Cooperative Company, which made butter in Dumbalk from 1894 until 1966 when it was absorbed by Murray Goulburn. During the 1950s when Grayson Dodd was a board director the Dumbalk factory was at its productive peak.

Grayson Dodd's interest in the preservation and recording of history did not stop at photography. He wanted remnants of the South Gippsland forest with its beautiful tree ferns

to remain in public hands and he lobbied politicians for an area of the Turton's Creek mining reserve to be a National Park and this was eventually achieved.

The Dodd collection of photographs became very well known in the district. From 1937 Grayson was frequently asked to present the slides with a commentary at functions to aid community project, particularly in World War II. After his death in 1964 his son Doug continued showing the slides on a 70-year-old magic lantern projector and a modern slide projector to show modern slides of the same places years on. During the 70s and early 80s Doug made an annual visit to Leongatha High to show the slides to Year 8 as part of their local history studies.

When John Murphy was writing No Parallel Doug made available some of the best photographs to be used in the book.

Grayson Dodd also made a valuable contribution to the religious life of the area. For 42 years he served the Dumbalk and Meeniyan Home Mission Station and continued when it was incorporated into the Leongatha Circuit. His memorial was the Dumbalk North Church.



A gathering at the base of a mountain ash by G Dodd



Having to cross the Tarwin River to move furniture by G Dodd

Because of their interest in photography the Dodd family made one of the best visual records of land clearing and farm developments ever produced in Victoria. We are able to look at these photographs and see the development of our farming land. It seems that Grayson wanted us to know what happened. The 80 images in this collection add enormously to our photograph collection and for this we are very grateful.

**The reunion at the Grassy Spur School organised by the Charlton family.** Family members and others with a connection to Grassy Spur School gathered at the old school site to see the unveiling of a plaque honouring the school and the Charlton family. The family provided the land for the school, which ran from 1903 to 1974. Three generations of the family were students and teachers. The Charlton family also contributed to the Grassy Spur pool and many other facilities in the Stony Creek district.



## **McIndoe Park**

The park was established on the corner of Bent St and Turner St in 1975. It was named after Robert (Bob) McIndoe who was a long serving shire councillor and Shire President of Woorayl Shire. He was also a long-term member of the Leongatha High School council. Turner St was once a stock route for cattle and sheep being moved to the railway yards to be sold or the recreation reserve for dipping. A creek flowed through what would become the park and the area was swampy and surrounded by scrubby vegetation. High School students walking to the recreation reserve for sport had to cross over a creek. The creek flows north through the park, under Turner Street and on to Yarragon Road where a culvert takes the water under the road until it becomes a creek again and continues on to enter Coalition Creek. There were few houses near the park area when it was first proposed. This boggy land needed to be raised and up to 2 metres of fill was needed to level the site. The facilities at the park

were basic at first but over the years better play equipment, shelters, BBQ's and toilets were built. The Leongatha Lion's club worked with the South Gippsland Shire to improve the facilities over a number of years.

This very impressive park is used by locals and visitors alike. The annual Australia Day celebrations are held there and many families enjoy taking their children there for an outing

### **The Streetscape project.**

We now have a wonderful database of the shops and businesses in the central area of Leongatha. The project started 2 years ago when Ian Lester took the photos and filed them in location order with information about the businesses and previous uses. Alan McGuinness has placed all this onto a database on the computer. We can now add photos from the past to the files as well as information about the site overtime.

Advertisements from **The Star** March 28 1947. These give us information about the businesses in the town



## **Can you help?**

### **Cemetery Tours**

The Society would like to run some tours of the Leongatha Cemetery and require a coordinator to develop the tours. We do have information used on earlier cemetery walks but we need someone to take on this task.

### **Coming Events**

- At the June 14th meeting Robert Sage will talk about the history of Churches in the district
- At the July meeting our speaker will be Wal Cayzer. He has so much knowledge and we must record it.
- The Daffodil Festival will be on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>. We will be open during the festival and will have special displays on. Help will be needed setting up and opening the rooms. A roster will be made closer to the date

### **Membership**

There are a number of members who have not paid their membership for 2016-17. If you have a dot on your newsletter you have forgotten to pay.