



# Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

*Newsletter*

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## *Preserving Our Heritage*

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### *The latest news*

• **Annual meeting** At the Annual meeting the following members were elected to the executive  
President Ian Lester

Vice Presidents Lola Bailey and Rob Williams

Secretary Lyn Skillern

Treasurer Pat Spinks

Archivist Pat Spinks

• **Our rooms.** The renovation of the Mechanics' Institute continues. Thank you to the Shire (and the Commonwealth Government for the money) for the painting, repaired sky light, new electricity connections, new carpet, and most of all for the return of the awnings on the front. These were removed by the Shire of Woorayl in 1987 and have been stored in Don William's shed. This has been a long saga and it is nearly over. Thank you to all those members who have, over the years, put in applications for grants to have them put back. We may be back in the rooms by October

• **Heritage Victoria Volunteers** Pat and her helpers have completed their 6 month program and it has been a great success.

• **The history of medical services in Leongatha and District.** The project is continuing. Thanks to Jon Murphy and Lola Bailey for their work on this subject. Lyn Skillern is now piecing the information together for the editor Ann Dettrick from the Monash University Gippsland Medical School

**Thank you Audrey.** It is difficult to imagine the financial statement without Audrey Hall. The bank account might just turn up its toes. After 24 years, Audrey is handing over the books to Pat Spinks. Over these years, our Society has grown, as has the amount of money we turn over in a year. Audrey has never made a mistake. Our auditor Ed Ford tried to catch her out but never could. Audrey is not

leaving us and will remain as a member and hopefully attend our various functions. All the best for the future. Audrey has already been made a life member of our Society for her fine work.



President Ian Lester presents Audrey with flowers at the Annual Meeting

### **President's Report for the year 2008-9 by Ian Lester**

The Leongatha and District Historical Society has continued to move forward and develop a heritage preservation organisation of which the community can be proud. The community we serve needs to respect and value our work and we need to promote ourselves and make ourselves relevant.

Our new year started with the Daffodil Festival exhibition for 2008. This featured a number of subjects, the main one being "Murders and Mysteries". Information on the disappearance of the *Lady of the Swamp*, Margaret Clement, together with many papers relating to her family formed the main display with items on the Soderman murders and Wyberg's gold adding to the theme. Photographs of schools and school gardens and some pieces of sporting memorabilia added to the exhibition. Thank you to all involved in the setting up of this exhibition. On the Saturday of the festival, we held our own *Antiques Road Show*, which involved people bringing along items to be valued by Mr Ford of Inverloch.

In October 2008, we had our annual bus tour and this involved visiting three homes in the Berry's Creek, Wooreen, and Mt Eccles areas. This day was a great success with many locals seeing places for the first time. Thank you to the Chalmers, Thompson, and Spinks families for making their homes available. An excellent afternoon tea was had at "Hollyside" the home of Pat and Jim Spinks and their restored 1880's home was wonderful to see.

On the tour, we passed the Wooreen School and Avenue of Honour. July 2008 saw the restoration of the Wooreen Avenue of Honour. Thanks to Nicole Pouw and Jeannie Dekker the trees were restored and those that had died replaced. We are now looking at the Koorooman East Avenue of Honour as the next project of this type

"Tullaree" and the "*Lady of the Swamp*" were big in 2008. Richard Shears wrote a new version of his book on Margaret Clement and together with Mirboo and District Historical Society we were given copies of documents. These included Peter Clement's will and letters from Margaret to her family when she was in great financial distress. A special night devoted to the story of the "*Lady of the Swamp*" was a great success and drew a good crowd. Members also spoke about this subject at the history conference at Coal Creek. In May, an open day was held at "Tullaree" and we had a display set up on the *Lady of the Swamp*. This day was a huge success for the organisers and we were pleased to help and promote our society. Thank you to Johanna Haasjes and those who helped with the display.

Our Pioneer Room was reorganised and the display was colour coded and this made it easier to follow. This needs some work as the very hot weather impacted on photographs and labels. We also have a new sign for the street to advertise our exhibitions and activities.

The Stradbroke Hospital was the subject of our Australia Day function. Remembering Sister Janet Potter who ran the hospital from 1921 to 1957 and the doctors who served the hospital was another triumph. Over 130 people attended the day and they enjoyed hearing about the life and work of Janet Potter, Dr Francis Wood, Dr George Bennett, and Dr Alec Bennett. Bill Bennett, the son of Alec and grandson of George, gave an interesting talk based on his discussions with his father. Sister Potter's relations kindly loaned us items and with memorabilia from our own collection, a fine display was mounted. The names of over 400 babies born at the hospital have been collected so far and entered onto a database.

We were fortunate to receive two grants in the past year one from the Shire of South Gippsland for cabinets in the hallway and one from the State Government for the purchase of a new computer and the setting up of a network system

Members have been attending very valuable workshops at Coal Creek run by The Museums Association of Australia Victorian Branch. Those who attended these sessions have been inspired to implement many of the ideas discussed in these sessions

Pat Spinks has been working with volunteers to have the collection photographed and these photographs entered onto the catalogue. This project was organised by Heritage Victoria and we are very fortunate to have been assisted in this way.

Finally, I will mention the giant task that has been undertaken recently. This involved moving our entire collection out of the Mechanics' Institute so the building could be painted and renovated. Thanks to Lola, Pat, Johanna, Lyn, Jim, Albert and anyone else who packed up the boxes of items and moved them to storage. The storage, in most cases, being their own homes. Thank you also to Kelvin Smith for his help with boxes and storage. The building will be closed until September and we will set up new displays when we are allowed back in.

The cataloguing and organising continues and this work seems never ending. Our archivist Pat Spinks and her helpers have done well with this but there never seems to be enough time. Our research continues and our quarterly journal covers many interesting subjects. Thank you to John Murphy for his work in recording the history of medical care in the area for Monash Gippsland. As I said earlier, we strive to make ourselves relevant and to be seen as a valuable asset to the district.

I thank our entire executive on a great years work. Our membership is increasing and we look forward to new developments in the future. Special thanks must go to Audrey Hall who is retiring after many, many years as our treasurer. I wish the society success in the future.



**Part of the wall to be repaired**

# Special Article

By Johanna Haasjes

Johanna and a number of other members have been attending a series of workshops run by Museums Australia at Coal Creek Korumburra, These have been very valuable and we need to implements many of the ideas gained at these workshops. Here are some of the key points, which the Society needs to consider in the future.

The National Museum Standards:

Building blocks for good practice

1. Managing the museum
2. Involving communities
3. Developing significant collections

## 1 Managing the Museum

The practical running of the Society/Museum (these terms were interchangeable at the workshop)

Such as: opening times/ services offered/ storage/ exhibitions/ meetings etc

**BUT ALSO, who does what? TEAM WORK**

Divide up the tasks. (Professional museums rotate the tasks but we need to rely on volunteers with special interests and skills. At Leongatha, we have people who are best at research/ cataloguing/ education/ exhibitions etc

## 2 Involving Communities

“It is a requirement of membership that you are available to assist the Society/Museum in such tasks as cataloguing, preservation, exhibitions, customer service etc” (part of Community Museum Volunteer Agreement) Much work could be done to document what is involved and what is possible

**Question: Why catalogue?**

**Answer: To record information about the collection and to pass knowledge on to the next committee.**

The above is relevant for much of what happens at the Historical Society!

We need to refine

*Statement of Purpose, Acquisition policy, Procedures and expectations, Training of volunteers*

## 3 Developing significant collections

We are the custodians of the community collection.

Items of local significance are the heart of the Historical Society’s collection.

A community collection must make connections – with stories about the items

EG, A large collection of cameras is meaningless, unless the photographer had local connections

As a teacher, I would like to put a case for items of general historic interest connected to the region – tools, toys, household items that may not specifically have belonged to someone in the district, but could have.

If you do not want an item – do not accept it (a museum is not a half way house between home and the tip.)

Is an item a loan or a donation? (Have a prepared donation form with date, description, and signature)

**A collection must be catalogued because:**

It helps to prove ownership

It helps to look after objects

It enhances the significance of an item

It ensures information is recorded not lost

Computer catalogues can bring items together for such things as research, exhibitions, and general information for the public.

### Cataloguing process

What do you know about the item?

What don’t you know about the item?

What do your visitors want to know?

What does your community want to know?

What do you want to tell people? (students/visitors/others)

**Cataloguing is a BIG task that needs a team to agree on what is important, be consistent with terms and to be trained in the system. The actual entering is limited to one or two people.**

Part of this process is to be able to write a significance statement. An item must be relevant and significant in some way to warrant being in the collection

## Example

### Christening robe / Reg 211

- a. A hand sewn christening robe/ date about 1880/ history unknown/donor unknown
- b. A hand sewn christening robe with lace inserts. The robe was made by Mrs Maryanne Jones (nee Campbell) of Carrickbrook in the 1880's. The lace was made by Maryanne's mother Mrs Rose Campbell. The robe was made for Maryanne's first child Michael. It was used by her six children and successive generations of the Jones family until the 1950's. Note Michael Jones was headmaster of Carrickbrook School 1925 to 1940. See photos

It is important to build up a reference library to help with research. Websites can also help these days

### Editors note

**This is food for thought.** Thanks Johanna. We need to set up teams to help with all the tasks. We ask our members for a little of their time to help. Many of you know so much about the local area and your knowledge is so valuable. When we return to the Mechanics' Institute, we will be planning. Watch this space!

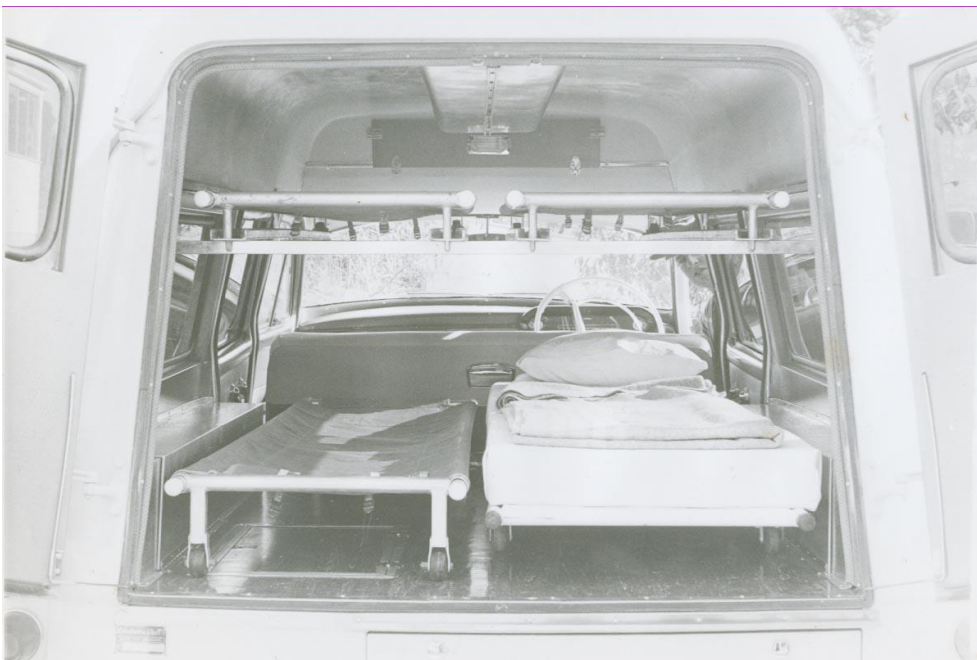
## Feature Article

### The Leongatha Volunteer Ambulance Service

By Lyn Skillern

From its simple beginnings in 1949-50, a volunteer ambulance service operated in Leongatha. It was called at first the Leongatha District Ambulance Service and was run by a committee. Following a grant of £750 from the Shire Council and the State Government, a Dodge ambulance was purchased and was manned by a team of volunteer drivers. The ambulance was kept in a purpose built shed at the garage of Weymouth Brothers, who were also involved with the service. The group was organised by local business man Bert Smith, Bert's brother George Smith was the first captain and his wife Joyce the secretary for many years.

The letter book kept by Mrs Smith has been used to piece together the story outlined in this article. This ambulance service provided much needed emergency care for the people of the region. The volunteer drivers attended local people in need and took them to hospitals in Leongatha, Wonthaggi and Korumburra as well as Melbourne. In 1952, Mrs Smith wrote a letter asking where she could obtain a map of Melbourne showing the location of hospitals. She points out that this would be of great benefit to the drivers.



**The inside of the new ford ambulance**

Funds for the ambulance came from the Hospitals and Charities Commission in the form of grants and from local subscriptions. The Shire of Woorayl made regular donations of £25 and donations also came from Rotary, Apex, the RSL, and others.

A Ladies Auxiliary conducted many events to raise money for ambulance supplies. In December 1952 Mrs Smith wrote a letter to Mrs Watson of the Ambulance Auxiliary thanking them for the funds to buy an adjustable stretcher and an emergency crib. Many local businessmen and tradesmen volunteered their time to keep the ambulance going and the building in which it was kept in good repair. Mrs Smith also wrote several letters to the Attorney Generals Department for permission to hold regular raffles, as well as lucky envelopes and spinning wheels at the annual Agricultural Show.

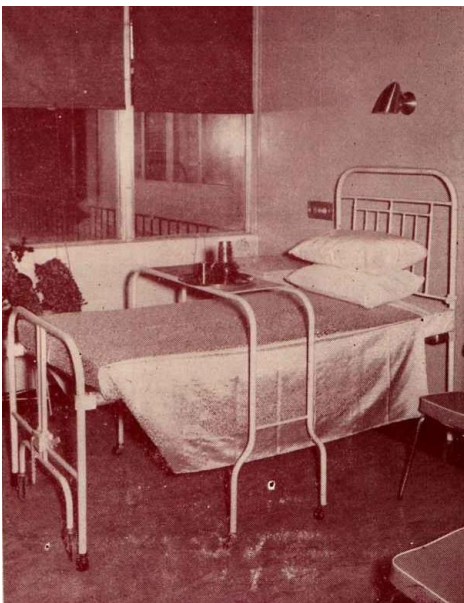
Training was held in the parish hall. First Aid was important and members of stretcher parties and drivers learned what to do in the event of such things as shock, bayonet wounds, bullet wounds concussion, broken bones, fractures, sprained ankles, gravel rash, bleeding and the need for resuscitation

In July 1953 Mrs Smith wrote to the Hospital and Charities Commission for a grant to buy a new ambulance. She stated that the current ambulance was not suitable for the miles it travelled and it was difficult for the drivers who had to go to Melbourne and back often twice a week. Fund raising began with donations coming from local service and sporting clubs, school mother's clubs and businesses. It was interesting to note that the Myer Emporium made a donation.

In 1954 the committee arranged the purchase of this new ambulance. This was a cream ford custom line sedan especially modelled to be an ambulance in Geelong. Members of the committee went to Geelong to see such an ambulance and the Geelong Ambulance Service were most helpful in organising this purchase.

The organisation changed its name several times. At first it was the Leongatha and District Ambulance Service, then the Woorayl District Ambulance Service, and later the South Gippsland and District Ambulance Service. When the professional service came, Leongatha was the hub for much of South Gippsland

The service became professional in 1954. A Superintendent / Secretary position was established and a number of applicants made the trip to Leongatha for an interview. In November, Mr S O Holmes obtained the position and he was provided with a Housing Commission House. This marked the beginning of the professional service we have now.



Woorayl Hospital bed in 1958



