

Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Newsletter Volume 4 Number 4 November 2007

Preserving our heritage

President : Geoff Michael

Secretary : Lyn Skillern Tel 56686304

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Email : leongathahistsoc@yahoo.com.au

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The latest news

One Bag in Six The Story of Onion Growing in South Gippsland by John Murphy is ready for publication. This will be launched in March 2008 at a date to be set. John has researched the changes in the growing of the humble onion over a period of around 100 years and has uncovered some interesting stories relating to the production, harvesting and selling of this wonderful crop. To help celebrate the onion we will be producing a recipe book to be launched at the same time. This book will contain members' favourite onion recipes as well as some interesting uses for onions as garden sprays and poultices. If you have any onion recipes please submit them to Johanna Haasjes, Pat Spinks or Lyn Skillern for inclusion in the book.

The South Gippsland History Conference. This will be held at Coal Creek Korumburra on February 23rd 2008. There will be many interesting speakers on a day that will celebrate the history and culture of the South Gippsland region. For further information contact Lyn Skillern on 56686304

Honour Board Replica - Lyn Skillern

On October 26th the Replica of the Leongatha High School World War One Honour Board was unveiled at Leongatha Secondary College. The board looked magnificent in its new home, the foyer of the Leongatha Secondary College West Campus Office. The ceremony was attended by Keith Hogan, Geoff and Mavis Hogan, Ron Smith and his wife and several guests. It was wonderful to see many relatives of Don and Harry Chalmers, whose names are on the board, at the unveiling. Roger Nelson also attended and he is related to B L and C L Nelson. This board is well worth a look and is able to be viewed by visiting the Leongatha Secondary College West Campus Office. This is the old Leongatha High School building.

The launch of our website

On October 16th the Society officially launched its website www.leongathahistory.org.au. Geoff Michael welcomed the guests and members, and John Murphy told some stories about the Billiard Room and the Library which once functioned in our venue. The Mayor Jenni Dean spoke of the need to preserve our heritage and what a wonderful building the Mechanics' Institute is. She then clicked the mouse on the computer to bring the site onto the screen.



The Mayor Jenni Dean launches the website

Don Williams, Jillian Durance, Margaret Stokes, Ian Lester and John Murphy at the launch

The Unveiling of the Leongatha Secondary College Visual Honour Roll

On Friday November 9th the Honour Roll Presentation researched and designed by Lyn Skillern was unveiled at the school. Family members and friends of the 22 ex students of the school killed in World Wars One and Two gathered to remember them and look at the new presentation. It was wonderful to see the sons of Hector McDonald and Harry Trotman, the grandson of Harry Trotman, the brothers and sisters of Jack Brock, Martin keys, Des Maxted, Arthur Grabham, Tom Poulton, and Max Taylor, the sisters in law of Mitchell Wightman and many nieces and nephews of the fallen. The presentations were framed by Gerard Bruning and are able to be seen at the Leongatha Secondary College East Campus administration area. Members of the public are welcome to come and view the displays.



Lyn Skillern and
Peter Trotman

The Indigenous Vegetation of South Gippsland a report on a talk by Ian Starkey

Ian came to the area 30 years ago and has worked as a nurseryman in the cultivation of native plants. The early settlers recorded in *Land of The Lyre Bird* that they had a fondness for the native bush. Some left pockets of remnant vegetation but unfortunately this was destroyed by bushfire and rabbits. There is little remnant vegetation left but the need to preserve what we have and replant what has gone has been keenly felt in recent times. The blue gum country was very good farmland and it was cleared early. Many coastal areas were left alone until the use of fertilizers made the land useful. Sadly, vast areas were cleared by machines in the 1950s. Now thankfully, the small patches that remain are being looked after. There is a positive view of indigenous vegetation. There are rebates for saving vegetation and assistance given to help landowners fence areas off to protect them from stock.

Our area has a great diversity of vegetation with coastal heathland in the south, then foothill forests as one moves inland and mountain ash forest in the higher, steeper land. In the current climate, acacias which are more adaptable to dry conditions are invading some areas. The plants that like higher rainfall and more sheltered environments are under stress. They need fencing and weeding to cope. The blanket leaf is under threat because it grows in gullies and the areas of daisy bush or musk is no longer as thick as they used to be. The hazel, a mid story plant in the mountain ash forest, is a very strong plant. It was used for axe handles. Hallston has a rare yellow flowering version.

The blackwood wattle is the most common plant. They drop seed annually and these remain viable in the soil for a very long time. Silver wattles are similar. These plants come up when the land has been disturbed especially when road works are done. Blackwoods can come up from suckers and they like creek banks. They do not however do well in dry conditions.

Landcare and catchment authorities fund the revegetation of creeks and rivers. River frontage and erosion control are the highest priority. The Powlett project has seen 1,000,000 trees planted in 12 to 13 years but this is only 1% of the catchment. Nurseries involved in this work get a contract to provide plants. The mix of species used to be 40% eucalypts but now they are down to 5%. There is much more diversity in the mix because people are more aware of what was there originally. This mix encourages birds. Replantings now have between 15 and 30 plant varieties used. Some have had 100 varieties. Pittosporum has spread all over and it is a pest in places. Hamann's bush is full of it and the root system stops other plants from growing.

Some plants to note

The green belled tree correa can be seen on Amey's Track and higher up north of Toora.

Cunzia is spreading and is a pest in East Gippsland. It has a mass of white tea tree like flowers and is to be seen near Ruby.

The local mint bush, the Victorian Christmas Bush, likes gullies and foothills country. In Leongatha North it has been flowering earlier every year recently. Garnia has a flower suitable for butterflies and can be seen at Loch. Edible plants are around and one, the lilly pilly makes nice jam.

Tree rows need to be about 10m wide. This enable the planting to be in layers or levels. In some areas you must be careful that animals do not eat the plants. Bush rats like grasses ; they like red soil and damp.

Categories of forest

Wet Forest , such as that found at Mt Worth is in the north of the region

Damp Forest is located in the Hallston area

Herb rich forests are lower down in altitude

Lowland forest such as peppermint, messmate, wattle, peas, banksias are nearer the coast

There is a very good brochure to be obtained from the Shire on indigenous plants

Around the town of the Leongatha there were manna gums, Worthy St has blue gums and messmates

The Guide park in A' Beckett Street has original messmates

There were big swamp gums in McIndoe Park but they were removed and replaced by blue gums.

McIndoe park was originally a fern gully

Hamann's Bush This is one of the last remaining piece of original vegetation. In it are mountain ash, messmate, stinkwood and pittosporum. There has been planting at Haw's property on the other side of the road. In November there are wild flowers and there are still many birds. In winter there are good fungi and mosses. A fern gully exists at one end. Green hood orchids are to be found as well as bird orchids, potato orchids, fairy orchids and leek orchids. A visit to Hamann's Bush will be held at a date to be arranged in the future.

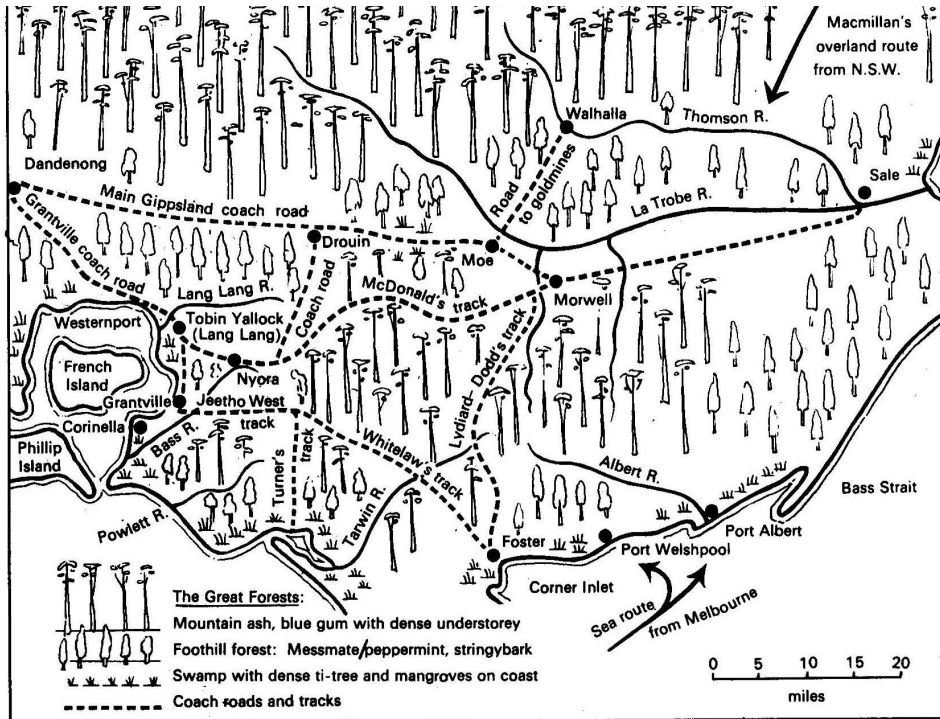


Fig. 20 Sketch map of Gippsland in 1870

from Phyllis Reichl *The Mountain Forest of Gippsland* 1968

FUND-RAISING PROJECTS OLD AND NEW

Books

The Society stocks a wide range of books of historic local interest, which make great gifts at this time of the year or any other time. While some are recent publications, others are the last of a print run and won't be available once the last copy is sold. John Murphy is our most famous and prolific author, but other members have also produced books or are in the process of doing so.

Lizzie Larkin's Preserves

The sale of marmalades, jams, sauces and pickles provides a steady income for the Society. Donations of fruit are welcome, as we use only locally grown produce. If you would like to become one of our cooks, please contact Lyn or Johanna.

Postcards

Two different postcards of Leongatha in 1912 are available @ 20 cents each. One shows the railway station, the other the corner of Bair and McCartin Streets.

Wildflower Cards

Margaret Stokes and Kath Murphy are responsible for our latest project - a beautiful range of blank cards featuring photographs by Lola Bailey and Gwen Hepburn of named orchids found in the Leongatha district. Each card has details of the orchid on the back, and is most appropriate to send overseas or anywhere. Cards are \$2 each and available at the Society

Natural Fragrance Sachets

We would like to make some more fragrance sachets for which we need dried lavender and/or other herbs, lace or other dainty fabric, ribbon and helpers to put them together. Small cards attached to the sachets, refer to the scent farm whose story is told in "*The Leongatha Labour Colony*" by John Murphy. Please leave donations at the Society, or contact Johanna.

Onion Recipe Book

John Murphy's latest book is the history of the district's onion growing industry, to be published early next year. We would like to produce an onion recipe book for the occasion, and appeal for family recipes, especially those "with a story". Please forward them to Lyn or Johanna soon.

Soldiers' Recipes

A prized exhibit in the Pioneer Room is a battered cake tin with lid and the inscription on the label "Bake cake in tin". For 20 cents you can have your own copy of the recipe for the Soldier's Pound Cake, a rich fruit cake sent to soldiers serving overseas. Similarly, ANZAC biscuits found their way to loved ones far from home. For ANZAC Day 2008 we hope to publish a Soldiers Recipe Book and we welcome contributions of recipes and/or stories. Please forward them to Lyn or Johanna.

Leongatha Town Walk brochures

These are self-directing and free, available from the entrance foyer.

Leongatha Parks and Gardens

A brochure and map is in the making – hopefully ready by Easter

Contact Lyn by phone on 5668 6304 or email at leongathahistsoc@yahoo.com.au
& Johanna by phone on 5664 2232 or email at albert60@sympac.com.au

A Re invigorated Billiard Room

Pat Spinks, Johanna Haasjes and Ian Lester have been working hard on redeveloping the pioneer display in the Billiard Room. Rob Skillern came up with some fresh ideas as did Pat and Johanna. The display is now colour coded and visitors will be encouraged to start their visit by reading the history of the Billiard Room by first entering the witness box. We are interested in billiard room stories and Rob would like to video some of our members reminiscing about passing time playing billiards.

Christmas and End of Year Celebration

This will be held at the home of Pat and Jim Spinks at *Hollyside* Leongatha North on December 7th. *Hollyside* is at 315 Canavan's Rd, 3 kms and 150m from the intersection of Canavan's Rd and Yarragon Rd. *Hollyside* is the first house on the left after crossing the bridge over Wilkur Creek (no sign). This is opposite the Leongatha North Telephone Exchange and Terry Shandley.s property.

To get to Yarragon Rd travel towards Mirboo North and turn left at the top of Crighton's Hill and go straight ahead.

Hopefully as many members as possible will be attending. Please let Pat know if you are coming.

Members are providing salad, cold meat or dessert. Please tell Pat what you are bringing

The telephone number for Pat Spinks is 56686365

Australia Day 2008

Meet at the Mechanics' Institute McCartin St Leongatha at 11.30 am for an historic walk in McCartin St.

Come and remember the shops and buildings of the past. A light lunch will follow in the Mechanics' Institute

Leongatha and District Historical Society

Program 2008

The Society holds a monthly meeting on the 3rd Tuesday of each month in the Mechanics Institute rooms.

All welcome.

The rooms are open to the public on Thursday and Friday of each week from 12 noon until 4pm – or by appointment.

January

Saturday January 26th Australia Day. A Street Walk will be held at 11.30 am. Meet at the Mechanics' Institute McCartin St. The walk will go from the Mechanics' Institute to the Commonwealth Bank and will be followed by a light lunch at the Mechanics' Institute

February

Tuesday 19th General Meeting

Saturday 23rd South Gippsland History Conference at Coal Creek 10.30 am to 3.30 pm

March

Tuesday 18th General Meeting

Shingler Memorial Lecture and launch of "One Bag in Six" the history of onion growing in South Gippsland by John Murphy. A date to be organised

April

Wednesday April 23rd Meeting held at the RSL. Dinner followed by a talk on the exhibitions on display there. Speakers John Murphy, Lyn Skillern and an RSL representative will talk about the RSL displays. A short general meeting to follow at the Mechanics' Institute

May

Tuesday 20th General meeting

June

Tuesday 17th Bronwyn Lowden will speak on the history of Mechanics Institutes at 8 pm

July

Tuesday 22nd General meeting

August

Tuesday 19th Annual/General Meeting

Celebration of 25 years in the Mechanics' Institute to be organised

September

Tuesday 16th Speakers local tradesmen on changes in the trades over time

Daffodil Festival will highlight the exhibition on the history of schools in the area. A fund raising activity involving the valuing of antiques will be held during the festival

October 21st General meeting

A bus tour of historic farmhouses in the area will be held on a date to be fixed.

November

Tuesday 18th The migrant experience with Johanna Haasjes

December Christmas break-up – location to be confirmed

Two exhibitions annually : Exhibition 1 : February to July The History of Sport

Exhibition 2 : September to February The History of Local Schools.

Dates and details to be advised

