

# Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

## Preserving Our Heritage

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President: Robert Sage

Secretary: Lyn Skillern    Mobile: 0400249048

Society rooms number: 56622492

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

Email:        [leongathahistory@gmail.com](mailto:leongathahistory@gmail.com)

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

PO Box 431 Leongatha 3953

## Latest news

### **A column in *The Star***

A representative from *The Great Southern Star* came in 8 weeks ago and requested that the Society write a weekly column for the newspaper. So far articles have been about the forest environment of South Gippsland, the recreation reserve, the Leongatha hotels and State School, stores and blacksmiths, epidemics and Outtrim. There will be articles on businesses, sport, small settlements and much more in the future. This column can only survive if we have help. We need your stories whether you write them yourself or have someone write them for you. Too often these tasks are left to one person and there are so many stories that need telling. Please tell Lyn if you have an idea that might be able to be used for the history column.

### **The Gippsland combined catalogue**

At the recent meeting of the Gippsland Association of Affiliated Historical Societies, the Gippsland combined catalogue of Gippsland's historical collections was launched. This was organised by the Gippsland cataloguing group and took five years to prepare. Our own Pat Spinks is the co-chair of the group. There are over 82,000 entries on the catalogue with each historical society contributing to the catalogue having a copy. Researchers are able to look for material on a subject, find where the references are and arrange a visit to view them.

In addition to the catalogue, members of the cataloguing group were given a digital copy of the Gippsland Municipal Directories dating from 1870 to the 1920. These directories contain details of the various Shires of the region over 50 years.

## **Anzac dinner/lecture on the Sandakan Death March**

The story of his pilgrimage along the Sandakan–Ranau Death March trail was told by Alan McGuinness at the Society's Anzac dinner on April 10<sup>th</sup> at the Leongatha RSL. Those attending met for dinner and later the group listened to Alan's talk.

The talk was about the POW camp in Sandakan, North Borneo, which was built as a refuelling airstrip for the Japanese during WWII. This was followed by a series of forced death marches from Sandakan to Ranau, a distance of 265 km, which resulted in the deaths of 1060 allied POWs, plus over 1300 deaths of prisoners left at Sandakan during 1945.

By the end of the war, of all the prisoners who had been incarcerated at Sandakan and Ranau only six Australians survived, all of whom had escaped. It is widely considered to be the single worst atrocity suffered by Australian servicemen during the World War II.

Alan spoke about his uncle, Ray Wiseman, and local man Frank Fitzpatrick.



Ray was from Murrumbena, but left home at 16 to become a general farm hand and boundary rider on a large property near Portland. He enlisted into the Australian Army Ordnance Corps – 2/4 Field Workshops in 1941. His role was road and bridge making, and then destroying them before any enemy use.



Frank was from Loch and enlisted in Leongatha into the 4<sup>th</sup> Reserve Motor Transport Company as a driver. He put his age down from 42 to 40 to allow him to join up. Frank and his wife, Alice, had 6 children and prior to enlistment he drove a tip truck and goods hire truck around the Loch district. His mate in the Army Motor Company was Ivan Benn, a member of the well-known pioneer family of Dumbalk.

Ray and Frank died within a few days of each other in the jungle camp at Ranau just a fortnight before the end of the war. They were named in the last 20 that were left in the camp when the last escapee fled.

## **Anzac Walk in the Leongatha Cemetery by Lyn Skillern**

On 14 April we held an historical walk in the Leongatha cemetery visiting the graves and memorials of soldiers from World War I and II and one nurse from WWI.

There are six official war graves in the Leongatha cemetery. These are for men who died after returning to Australia or while still serving in Australia. Trooper Robert Banks was from Koonwarra and served with the 4<sup>th</sup> Light Horse in Palestine and Syria. He took part in the famous Beersheba charge on 31 October 1917 and moved north after that action into the Jordan Valley where he was seriously wounded in 1918. Trooper Banks was taken to Egypt and from there returned to Australia. He was cared for at Caulfield hospital before passing away on 16 October 1918. He was returned to Leongatha to be buried in our cemetery. His wife Louise lived in Koonwarra. William Kelley returned safely from the Western Front having served at some major battles such as Bapaume, Menin Road and Villers Bretonneux. On returning to Australia he came to his family at Leongatha. He was rabbiting in McCartin's paddock when he was accidentally shot and killed. His marker was in poor condition early last year so we applied to the Commonwealth War Graves for a new one. This was provided in late 2018. George (Harry) Howard came back safely from the war but was sadly found

drowned in a creek near the butter factory shortly after his return. Harry had a wife Mae and four children. He was the older brother of Jim Howard, ancestor of the extensive Howard family in the district. The other official WWI war grave is that of Evan Thomas Munro. He suffered from trench fever and trench feet and other illnesses and returned to Australia in September 1918. He died of tuberculosis on 9 March 1921. He is buried in a family grave but has no official marker. We will apply for the marker he deserves in the near future.

There are two WWII official war graves, one for Roland Scott of Mt Eccles and one for Daniel Waide from Leongatha, who was in the Australian Army Postal Service. He died 6 June 1947. Daniel was the son of Joseph and Margaret Agnes Waide, husband of Mary Jean Waide.



The new grave of William Kelley who was accidentally shot in 1919

Roland Sydney Gibson Scott died of mumps on 28 June 1942 aged 18. He was an aircraftsman 1<sup>st</sup> class, the son of Archibald and Grace Scott of the Mt Eccles/ Wild Dog Valley area.

Several families placed the names of their sons who died serving overseas on family graves in our cemetery. Alan Russell and Jack Edney who died at Fromelles in July 1916 are remembered in this way. Jack Howard and his mate Fred Broadbent who were drowned in the sinking of the Montevideo Maru on 1 July 1942 are both remembered on a Howard grave. Brothers Fred and Cliff Ketels have a memorial on their parent's grave. Fred was with Jack Howard and Fred Broadbent while Cliff was killed in action in New Guinea in 1945. Harry Trotman Jr is remembered on the grave of his parents. Harry was killed in North Africa in 1941 serving with the New Zealand army. Harry senior was a survivor of WWI.

Horace Bair suffered severe ill health after WWI and died in 1926, he is buried in the Bair family plot. Dr Horace Pern came to Leongatha after serving in Gallipoli and France. He died in 1936 after a short illness. Dr Pern looked after the former soldiers and was very well respected in the area. His funeral was the largest ever seen in Leongatha at the time. He was buried in our cemetery with great ceremony

Victoria Caroline Myers is the army nurse in our cemetery. She served at the Caulfield hospital taking care of the wounded who were able to come home.

In the lawn cemetery Owen Hughes is remembered. Owen was one of our three survivors of the fall of Rabaul in 1942. His fellow survivor David Lawson is remembered on the Banksia Wall.

At the cemetery's Lone Pine we paid tribute to the seven men of Woorayl Shire who died at the battles of Lone Pine and The Nek at Gallipoli in August 1915.

Brochures on the significant graves in our cemetery are in the planning stage.

The grave of Horace Bair.



Horace Bair

### **Daryl Pease, the guest speaker in March**

R E Pease and Company was a significant business in Leongatha for many years. Daryl told the story of his merchant ancestors who ran stores in Drouin, Wonthaggi and Leongatha. The Pease family were originally from Cornwall. The founder of the family in Australia was Henry Motton Pease who wanted to leave his father's environment and start a new life. He was 18 when he came to Australia, arriving in Port Melbourne in 1871.

Eventually Henry travelled to Drouin and started a business there. He had 8 children, 2 boys and 6 girls, all of whom became merchants. His daughter Annie married Oliver Gilpin, who ran a chain of stores throughout Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania. Sarah married Arch Wilkinson of Warragul, Frances married a Whitton, Edith had a business in Yea and son John had a shoe shop in Geelong.

Robert Ernest Pease, called Boss, and to Daryl and his siblings Pop, was Daryl's grandfather. He married Lillian from Drouin and set up R E Pease in Wonthaggi in 1927. This business was very successful in that thriving mining community.



The family of Henry Pease



H Pease and Sons Drouin

Boss bought a shop in Leongatha in 1938. Daryl's father Vern was sent to manage the store and he stayed at McCartin's Hotel while he established the store.

Daryl's mother worked for the Oliver Gilpin chain of stores. She was a relieving manager for O Gilpins at Leongatha and Vern and Betty met and married in Ararat in 1939, They bought a house in Smith St and Daryl was born in 1940. The shop was going well but it was wartime and Vern joined the RAAF, going to Sale and Adelaide. Daryl's maternal grandparents who lived in Ararat packed all they could carry and moved to Leongatha. They lived in a small house at 55 McCartin St.

In 1945 after the war ended and Vern came home the business expanded to 40 McCartin St. The rammed concrete building, which is still there, was constructed and the space increased. In 1955 there was a big robbery which caused much distress. The double storied section was built shortly after. The Bank of NSW moved to Bair St from McCartin St in 1961 and Peases' took over the old bank site and this became a men's wear store. Peter Howard married Daryl's sister Christine and joined the business in 1968.

Another dramatic event occurred in 1969 when Moran and Cato, the self-service grocery two shops away in McCartin St burned down. This caused damage to *The Star* office and smoke damage to Peases'.

The family tried to keep the business growing, making changes all the time.

The men's wear went to Lyon St from the bank site in McCartin St and in 1974 they bought Morris grocers and the men's wear moved again back to McCartin St. In 1987 the family built on to the back of the men's wear where the café is now. The women's wear eventually went to Lyon St. A facility for making curtains and blinds was set up in the upstairs premises in McCartin St.

In 1988 the family celebrated 50 years in Leongatha, a big event for the family and town. In 1991 the men's wear was sold to Panthers but the family retain the free hold on the building. Eventually the women's wear closed.

Vern Pease died in 1995 and they closed the rest of the business down in 1997.

The original shop in Drouin, H Pease and Sons was sold to the Burrows family

The Pease family have a fantastic family tree printed and framed. It is interesting to note that Vern was Robert Vernon Pease, Daryl, Robert Daryl and Daryl's son Robert Adam. No-one uses the name Robert.

Our thanks go to Daryl for coming and telling us so much about his family and the business.



R E Pease and Co McCartin St Leongatha in the 1970s

### **The Ink set**

We had an interesting call from a man in Queensland who had found a writing set in an op shop. The set was well worn but it had been a gift for a Reverend Clark in Leongatha in 1899. Greg Kennedy donated the item to our society.



The inscription says

*Presented to Mr George Clark*

*By the members and adherents of the Wesleyan Church as a slight token of respect and esteem on the occasion of his departure from the district of Leongatha 5/4/1899*

## Coming events

### Monthly meeting

On 12 June Robert Sage will be speaking at our meeting

The subject is *Recollections of changes in our farming practices over time.*

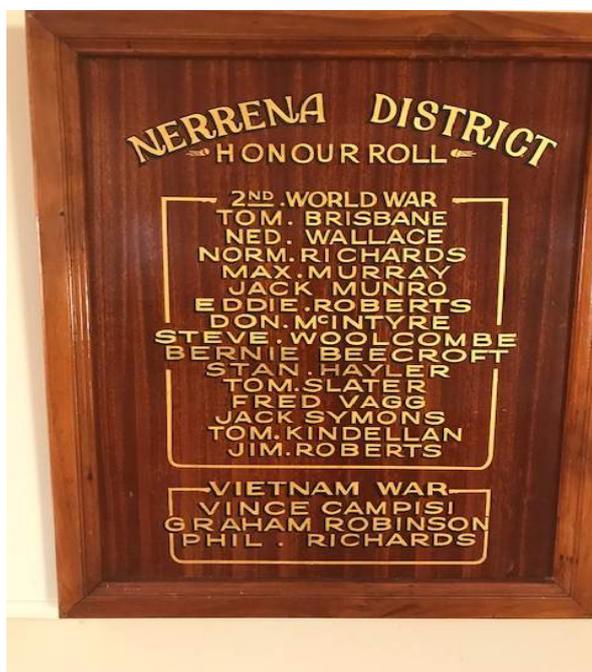
### Remembering soldiers at Nerrena

A gathering to remember the soldiers of the Nerrena area will be held at the Nerrena Hall on 16 June at 2 pm. The names of the Nerrena soldiers from WWI are listed below. Relations and friends of these men and those from WWII and Vietnam are most welcome to attend the event.

#### Soldiers on the Nerrena Hall WWI Honour Roll

Edwin Barrett *	David McCarthy*
Victor Stafford	Clifton Spargo
Henry Moore	Timothy Walsh
James Moore	Arthur Jordan
Bertram Drowley	Lewis Tuckett
Claude Drowley	Samuel Wasson*
Melville Bass	Stanley Timmin. * Fallen

The Honour Board for WWII and Vietnam.



The gathering at Nerrena will be at 2 pm. For more details contact President Tina Allen 0429642326 or secretary Mike Dortmans 0427741855

### Planning for the future

Do you have skills and ideas to help the Society survive into the future? We need help with cataloguing, presenting displays, raising funds, taking photographs and videos, expanding membership and recording local stories. Please come in on a Thursday or Friday from 12 to 4 pm or give us a call on 0400249048 or 56686365

