



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Preserving Our Heritage

Newsletter Volume 17 Number 1 February 2020

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

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Latest news

Lola Bailey. Long term and valued member of our Society, Lola Bailey, now resides in Woorayl Lodge. Lola seems happy and is being very well looked after.

Fruit needed Our Society has, for many years now, made money from the sale of jams, sauces and pickles. We need fruit to make these products or even better someone to make them.

Planning for the Shingler Dinner

We are in the process of organising the Shingler dinner for 2020. The speaker will be Linda Barraclough and the subject characters in Gippsland History. We need a South Gippslander or two for the presentation, any ideas most welcome.

Speaker in March

David Webster of Middle Tarwin will be our speaker at the March meeting. He will talk about his family and their relationship with the Middle Tarwin area on Wednesday 11 March at 8 pm.

Future displays

The next display will be on emergency services. Ideas for speakers and activities to interest the public will be most welcome.

Need to raise funds

Our Society is always in need of ideas for raising funds or people who are prepared to seek sponsorship. Can you help?

The Early History of Foster. By Lyn Skillern

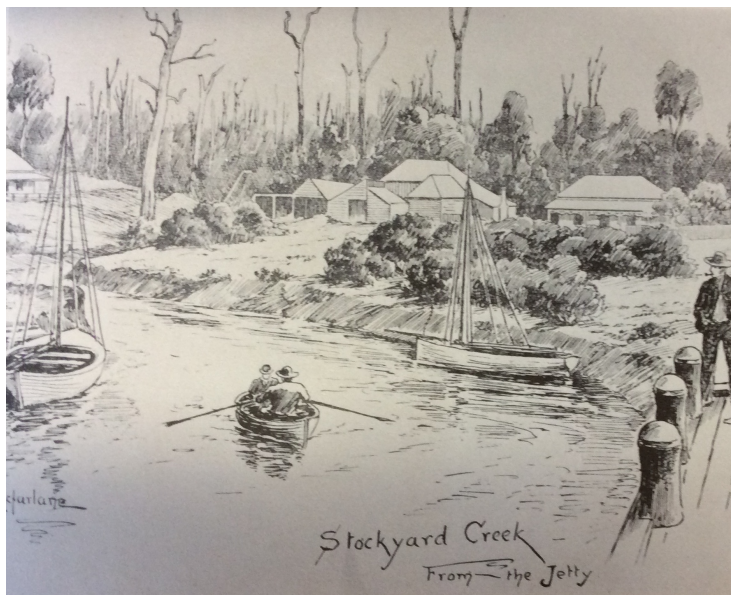
To celebrate the 150th Anniversary of Foster I have included an article about the early history of the town.

Explorer George Bass sailed into Corner inlet in 1798 but it would be another 43 years before a European settlement would be established on the inlet. In 1841 Port Albert was settled and it became a vital port for the export of cattle to Tasmania.

In time a rough stock route was established between Port Albert and Western Port. To help the movement of cattle stockyards were established to rest the animals on the banks of a creek that flowed into Corner Inlet north west of Port Albert. This creek was then given the name Stockyard Creek.

By 1860 John Amey, an ex- convict from Tasmania, had taken up land at Bennison east of Stockyard Creek and established a successful farm. Interestingly, one of the crops he grew, processed and sold to travellers was tobacco. He took his produce to Port Albert by bullock dray and packhorse. Amey's daughter Charlotte married the crown ranger James Simmons who was stationed at Port Albert.

In late 1869 a group of five timber splitters set up camp on Stockyard Creek. They cut timber illegally and transported these timber staves by boat for sale elsewhere. A boat carrying this timber was wrecked near Port Albert and some staves were washed ashore. The ranger decided to find the source of the staves and he travelled to Stockyard Creek to investigate stopping to rest at his father in law's house. Amey managed to inform the splitters that the needed to cease timber cutting. He suggested the men hide the timber and move upstream posing as prospectors. Amazingly, the splitters found alluvial gold and the settlement that was to become Foster came into being.



Stockyard Creek jetty

The five men and Amey registered their two claims and thus the news was out and the rush began. Men quickly moved into Stockyard Creek and a shanty and tent town grew. Miners came to Port Albert by sea and then on Captain Pinkerton's boat 'Tarra' then to Stockyard Creek landing. Others walked overland from Melbourne via Western Port. By 1871 tracks were cut from Moe and Rosedale to Foster.

As was usual in gold mining settlements, disputes broke out over claims. William Foster the police magistrate and gold and mining warden at Sale was called to Stockyard Creek to adjudicate. He arrived in February 1871 and decided that this settlement needed a name. The

name Foster was suggested by a resident who wanted to curry favour with the magistrate and those present agreed. The town of Foster was born. William Foster himself wanted to name the settlement Canterbury after the Governor of Victoria.



FoG 2 – Stockyard Creek. The miners diverted its course many times.

Stockyard Creek early

1870s

Many miners were able to make some sort of a living but others pushed on through the dense forest to the Turton's Creek diggings 31 kms away to the north. Men continued to come to Foster, more substantial huts were constructed and women started to arrive. In April 1871 there were 345 men and 24 women in the town. Also, in that year funds were raised to build a Mechanics' Institute. In the following year a post office and school were established and in 1874 a Methodist church was constructed.

Gold discoveries continued for the next few years but as gold declined land selectors were needed to expand the settled area. By the early 1880s land in the coastal plains nearby was mostly taken up and potential farmers sought selections in the hill country near Foster from 1884. This land was soon purchased and Foster developed as a service centre. Originally in the Alberton Shire, Foster, with its increase in population following the arrival of the railway in 1892, sought to have a shire of its own. In 1894 the South Gippsland Shire was established with its headquarters in Foster.

Education was seen as important by the early settlers of Foster and an education committee was formed in November 1871. The committee wrote to the Board of Education in Melbourne (pre-Education Department) stating that they had a building for 100 or more children and sought funds to hire a teacher. The committee advertised, hired James Ingram and renovated the old skittle alley to be a school. Mr Ingram and family arrived in February 1872. They travelled by sea to Port Albert from Melbourne and hired a bullock dray to take their possessions overland to Foster. The family travelled by boat to the Stockyard Creek landing and on foot to the township of Foster. School started in Foster on 18 March 1872 with an attendance of 35. Later numbers increased to over 100 after education became compulsory following the passing of the Education Act of 1872 and the formation of the Education Department. Even though the former skittle alley was unsatisfactory, Foster State School officially opened in that building in the new year of 1873. The school moved into the Mechanics' Institute and a new school was eventually constructed.



The railway at Foster

The railway came to Foster in 1892 with the station being some distance from the town centre. The following is an extract from a story of a rail trip to South Gippsland written in 1893

...our destination for the night, the township of Foster, nestling among the hills,...there we were standing on the station, and there was Foster about a mile away, but how were we to get to it, there is no road between the two. It seemed as if the Great Southern line is a very high minded, self-willed sort of line, pursuing its own independent course utterly regardless of the wants and supplications of people round about it..

The Illustrated Australian News (Melbourne) 1 Jan 1893 by J M



A bushfire near Foster

The Exchange Hotel is a very special feature of Foster. It opened in 1871 and was called Thornley's Hotel after its original owners William and Anastasia Thornley. William died in 1874 and Anastasia ran the hotel on her own for another 33 years. In 1905 the hotel was destroyed by fire and Anastasia had the hotel rebuilt in jarrah timber from Western Australia and the best materials available at the time. The unique tower was part of the new design. The

new hotel opened on 20 May 1907 but sadly Anastasia did not see this event as she died a few months earlier.

Anastasia Burke had come from Ireland to Australia as a single young woman and made a very special contribution to the town of Foster in her role as local publican. She is buried in Foster Cemetery.

The history of Foster and district is well preserved by the local Historical Society. They had the former post office moved to their site in the main street and is now the Foster Museum. Other buildings on the site include former schools from the area.

The exhibition on the history of Foster will run for the rest of 2020.

OAM for Eulalie Brewster



Eulalie receiving two GAAHS awards

Eulalie Brewster was awarded an Order of Australia in the Australia Day Honours this year. We at the Leongatha Historical Society are very proud of her. She joins John Murphy, Daisy Bacon and Ellen Lyndon as recipients of this great honour. Eulalie and her husband Oswald were members of the Woorayl Shire Historical Society as we were called before the Shire amalgamations in 1994. The couple moved to Inverloch when they retired from farming in the 70s. When questions were asked about the history of Inverloch Eulalie thought she would find out and she has been researching the history of that area ever since producing a short history of Inverloch and other small publications. Eulalie was a founding member of the Inverloch Historical Society and is their patron. Eulalie and Os were founding members of the South Gippsland Conservation Society and were very highly regarded field naturalists. Eulalie is considered one of Gippsland's top lady botanists and she is one of the lady botanists referred to in a book written by Terri Allen. Ellen Lyndon who was also a member of our Society is also honoured in this book. Well done Eulalie you are national treasure.

New Photos on Facebook

Bill Jackson placed the following photos on Facebook. They are of the Jackson family at a farm called Devonlea in Mardan South. They are interesting photos of the early 1930s in our region. The photo below mentions McKinnon's and no doubt refers to McKinnon's post office Mardan South as a location. I have asked Bill for more information about his family.



The Jackson children. Ernie, Rose, Dave and Reg



Annie Jackson with her children Dave, Rose, Reg and Ernie



This photo is of Mardan South School 1936, Reg and Rose circled. Can you identify anyone else?

MEMBERSHIPS

A reminder that your annual membership is now due.

\$30 for individuals \$40 for Family

A direct deposit may be paid into the society's bank account at National Bank, Leongatha:

Leongatha & District Historical Society

BSB: 083 735 a/c: 51588 3922

(Please include your name as reference, and notify us by e-mail to leongathahistory@gmail.com)

or post to

PO Box 431, Leongatha 3953

New memberships are welcome or updating your details by completing the form below:

Membership type: Single \$30 Couple/Family \$40

Name:

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Address:

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Telephone:

E-Mail:

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