



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Newsletter

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Preserving Our Heritage

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Latest news

The Shingler Dinner/Lecture. . Another wonderful evening was had by all when the Society ran the Shingler Memorial Dinner on October 19th. Thank you to Patrick Morgan, our guest speaker, for his interesting tales of murder and mystery in Gippsland. A shorter version of Patrick's lecture is presented in this edition of the Newsletter. We owe a debt of gratitude to the organizers of the event Margaret Stokes, Wal Cayzer, Robert Sage, Rob Williams and Ian Lester. The flowers on the tables and the posies for the guests were beautiful and thanks must go to Dawn Green, Mavis Wightman, Pat Spinks and Joan Michael for organising these flowers. It was pleasing to hear the positive comments from those present and stories from those with connections to the tales told.

Christmas/ end of year lunch

The Society's end of year lunch will be held on November 30th at *Hollyside*, the home of Pat and Jim Spinks, on Canavans Rd Mount Eccles South. Members are asked to bring a salad, cold meat or sweet for the lunch. Please contact Pat on 56686365 and let her know what you will bring so she can coordinate the food. The function will begin at 12 noon, drinks are BYO. We are very fortunate to have such a beautiful home and garden made available for this function, thank you Pat and Jim. Please ask for directions if you have not been to *Hollyside*.

Opening in January

It has been the custom for the Society to open each weekday in January and a roster has been prepared by Pat to allow this to happen. Joan Michael has volunteered to prepare the roster and members are asked to tell her when they are available. The rooms will be open on weekdays from January 2nd until Australia Day from 12 until 4pm. Please help.

Exhibitions The exhibitions on pioneer families will continue into the New Year. Pat Spinks has been reading a diary from the Funnell Family. This was written in the 1880s and many pioneer families are mentioned. The next display will incorporate the people and events mentioned in this wonderful diary.

Australia Day. The Society will open on Australia Day January 26th after the usual Shire function at McIndoe Park. The display will be officially opened at 2 pm.

Grant application

Two separate grant applications have been submitted recently. One was for fans to be installed in the building and the other for a series of memorial plaques to be placed on buildings and sites in the town. These applications take a lot of time to prepare and there is no guarantee of getting any money

Plans for the centenary of The Great War (World War 1). We have put in an application to Veterans Affairs for a grant to have a set of 50 photographs mounted for display. A display of Great War memorabilia will be set up for the daffodil festival next year. This will coincide with the centenary of the start of the war in 1914. The display will run for until December 2015 to coincide with the centenary of the evacuation of Gallipoli. From that date on we will run displays related to the centenaries of major battles such as Fromelle.



Who are these local soldiers from the Great War? One is Jock Paterson 3rd from left back row

Primary School visits

It has been very rewarding in recent weeks to have so many school children learning about local history.

Our first activity involved Lyn taking a walking tour with all the grade 3 students around the old High School site, now the Leongatha Primary School. Plans were made for Lyn to take another walking tour along Jeffrey Street to the town centre and for Ian Lester to do a cemetery visit. Unfortunately the weather caused the excursions to be cancelled. These students are doing interesting projects and have asked for our help. One boy came in with his mother to find some information about the Leongatha Football Club. A second activity involved a group of grade 3 students from St Laurence's School. These children came with their teachers to the museum for a visit. One student asked Lyn what her favourite items was and what her favourite photo was. That was a tough ask for someone so immersed in the collection. The children enjoyed the items and asked very good questions.

The Centenary of St Laurence's 2014

The church and school will be celebrating its centenary on the March long weekend 2014.

Photographs from Lindsey Smith

The family of Lindsey Smith recently donated a collection of photographs to the Society. Below is a photograph of St Laurence's School from that collection.



The first Church of St Laurence O Toole was built in 1895. This church was replaced by the current structure in 1913. The old church was converted into a school. The Sisters of St Joseph opened this convent school in 1914.

GIPPSLAND MYSTERIES by Patrick Morgan

The story of the Old Lady of the Tullaree Swamp is the most powerful of South Gippsland's mystery stories. One day in her old age in 1952 Miss Margaret Clements disappeared. There was a murder suspect, nominated by local gossip. There are Gothic and Dickensian aspects to this story – the cobwebs around the decaying house, the memory of parties long ago, a fading spinster like Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, the misty swamps and fens she wandered around which could hide sinister deeds. And then decades later the body of an elderly lady was found near the coast; this discovery meant that if this was her body, she had been killed by someone and removed from the property. But the coroner returned an open finding.

An earlier mystery was the case of Martin Wiburg, a Scandinavian ship's carpenter who pinched a consignment of 5000 gold sovereigns in Melbourne, then hot-footed it to Anderson's Inlet where he buried some of them. Wiburg persuaded the police to let him show them the burial spot of the sovereigns near Point Smythe, and in the process escaped, making him a popular hero. But he eventually got five years' gaol, then returned to live on the Tullaree property. He was thought to have drowned on a boat in Bass Strait, or did he fake his disappearance? And what happened to the sovereigns supposedly buried around Andersons' Inlet or at Tullaree? Locals still go out with a metal detector searching for Martin Wiburg's hoard.

In each of its first four decades Victoria had a major mystery story, and most of these took place in Gippsland. Soon after Melbourne was founded in 1835 an escaped convict, William Buckley, walked out of the bush. He had been part of the earlier Sorrento settlement in 1803 from which he absconded and was never heard of again for 33 years. He had lived around the shores of Port Phillip Bay with Aborigines who protected him as they thought him a supernatural figure, the white ghost of one of their own dead who had returned.

In the 1840s there was the saga of the lost white woman of Gippsland, a story with some parallels with the William Buckley saga. A woman passenger was believed to have survived a shipwreck on the Ninety Mile Beach in Gippsland and then been captured by an Aboriginal tribe. Search parties were sent out to find her, and Aborigines harassed to produce her, but she was never found, so the mystery was never solved.

In the 1850s there arose the legends of Bogong Jack and his gang, horse and cattle rustlers who stole animals on one side of the Alps, rebranded them in mountain hideouts and sold them on the other side. In some versions of his story he lived in the mountains with an Aboriginal tribe. He became a romantic folk hero because of his daring exploits in evading the police. Did he disappear into the mountains when pursued by police or was he murdered? Nobody knew how he ended up.

In the 1860s the heir to the Tichborne estates and title in England disappeared, and was said to have been sighted on the Victorian goldfields, perhaps at Omeo. A low grade butcher named Thomas Castro claimed to be the missing heir. The mystery was that some of his claims were plausible, but others were not. Public opinion in England and Australia was split for decades over the case. The case played up to the secret dream of many Australians that one day they might inherit an English fortune, like winning Tatts, and return to a baronial castle. The claimant sued for the estate in England and lost, and was then gaoled for perjury and false pretences.

Merely to tell these four basic stories is to reveal an underlying structure common to all four. In every case a person comes from England to Australia, the first step in going down in the world. Then they move to the bush, away from the structures of civilization, a second step on their descent. Then they live with Aborigines or with criminal bushranger gangs. Then they reverse the descent and began

to rise – William Buckley reappears back into our white European society, Bogong Jack becomes a hero, the Tichborne claimant is feted as he sues for the Tichborne title. All four are variants of the age-old tale of the hero, despised by all at home, who goes out into the badlands where he survives many tests and then returns triumphant to claim his rightful inheritance and his loved one. It is this archetypal trajectory which is attractive to the popular mind.

What the gossip and mythmaking does is to forget inconvenient facts in these stories, and to shape the story into some basic underlying pattern. Bogong Jack is in the public imagination a folk hero, a gentlemen outlaw with an image like Robin Hood, but he was present when the gold dealer Cornelius Green was hacked to death at Swift's Creek. Not very nice, but this event is conveniently forgotten by public opinion.

There are three different categories of evidence in these mystery stories – firstly what actually happened, then the literature about a famous incident or personality, and finally the folk myth versions, which proliferate and have come down to us. The job of the historian is to peel away the accumulated layers of literature and myth to reveal, as far as possible, the original basic events. For example: Bogong Jack is now named as a man called John Paynter, but this identification was made only in the 1950s – John Paynter, an Omeo butcher of the 1850s, was never known as Bogong Jack in his lifetime.

Why are there so many of these mysteries in Gippsland? Gippsland is full of mountains, forests and hidden valleys where you can get away from society and go to ground. Bushranging always takes place in mountain ranges, which provide cover. Gippsland attracts people who want to get away from it all, to be recluses and eccentrics, and in turn the rugged hidden terrain encourages this aspect of their personalities.


Gippsland has had another major mystery story in the last decade – the disappearance of Jadyne Leiske at Moe. There were two mysteries - where was the child's body, and whodunit? Then after much speculation about what had gone on, the body was found and a suspect, the boy-friend, was identified as the villain by both the police and the public. There were over the years a number of coroner's inquiries and a murder trial on this a case which, as the suspect was found not guilty, did not satisfy the public nor the family involved, and there has been a further inquest since.

Murders, mystery, crimes unsolved

GIPPSLAND has had its fair share of crimes and mystery especially in the 19th and 20th centuries; some still generate plenty of interest and speculation.

Stories of murder, mystery and the curiosity of crimes unsolved was the topic of Gippsland historian and author Mr Patrick Morgan, guest speaker at the annual Shingler lecture at Leongatha on Saturday October 19.

Attracting a full house of



Looking back: historian John Murphy, left, with fellow historian guest speaker Patrick Morgan at the Shingler Lecture.

From the Great Southern Star

Photographs recently discovered



**Now gone. The Woorayl District Memorial Hospital 1973
From Lyn Skillern**



The Corner of Horn St and Yarragon Rd 1960s, from Ian Lester

Program for 2014

January

The museum will be opened on weekdays from January 2nd

January A meeting to plan for Australia Day will be held on a date to be set.

January 26th Australia Day. Rooms open from 12.noon. official opening with afternoon tea 2 pm

February

February Committee meeting date to be decided in January

February 12th Speaker meeting with Margaret Turra on the Guy family of Wonnangatta Station

Membership for the year 2013-2014 is now due. We need the details below for our new register of members as required by the Incorporation Act

Leongatha and District Historical Society

P O Box 431

Leongatha 3953

Name.....

Address

Telephone number.....

Email address

I do not wish to have my contact details passed on to any other group

Family \$35

Single \$25

Newsletter only \$7

Your donation is be most appreciated

