

# Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

*Newsletter*      Volume 5 Number 2 May 2008

*Preserving our heritage*

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## **The latest news**

### **The Shingler Memorial Lecture**

The Daker's Centre was full of people, Wal Cayzer was dressed in a dinner suit, the flowers were wonderful, the tables beautifully set and the onion display in place. The scene was set for the Shingler Memorial Dinner. On April 12<sup>th</sup> the Leongatha Historical Society held the Shingler Memorial Dinner, a dinner held in memory of the Shingler Family. Miss Dorothy Shingler donated much memorabilia and made a financial bequest to the society for which we are most grateful. This year the guest speaker was John Murphy and the occasion was used to launch John's latest book "*One Bag in Six :- the history on Onion Growing in Gippsland 1900-2007*" and to celebrate John the historian. Professor Weston Bate, former President of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria launched the book and he entertained those present with his comments about onions and John Murphy "a potato writing about onions" John, who was himself an onion grower, spoke about the subject from personal experience and he had plenty of stories to entertain the audience. .Noted Gippsland historian Patrick Morgan spoke of John's great contribution to the preservation of history in South Gippsland. John, who is not a trained historian has written so much and is the envy of many academics. John deserved his night and we hope he enjoyed being the "main man" at the dinner. "One Bag in Six" is available at the Society rooms or you can order one from the secretary

Thank you to the organising committee Margaret Stokes, Wal Cayzer, Rob Williams, Ian Lester and Geoff Michael. Thank you to Lola Bailey for selling tickets and working out the seating plan. The floral display was beautifully arranged thanks to Joan Michael and Pat Spinks and many members helped set up the hall and clear up afterwards. Thank you everyone

Johanna Haasjes compiled an onion recipe booklet for the occasion. We sold out and had to have a reprint. Thank you Johanna for all your efforts and thank you also to Al Whitmore for drawing the illustrations for the booklet. This book is available from the rooms or by order from the secretary.



*Leongatha delegates to Onion Growers Conference, Geelong, 1948.  
l/r Jim Hogan, John Murphy, Arch Burchell, Fred Cross*

41

## **ANZAC Meeting**

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> we celebrated Anzac Day by having dinner at the RSL and then listening to John Murphy, Rod Cameron and Lyn Skillern talk about some of our notable servicemen and the memorabilia on display. More information from the talks is to be found in a feature article later in the newsletter. Members flew the society's flag for Anzac Day. Lyn Skillern spoke at the Leongatha Secondary College Service and Pat Spinks was the speaker at the service in Mt Eccles

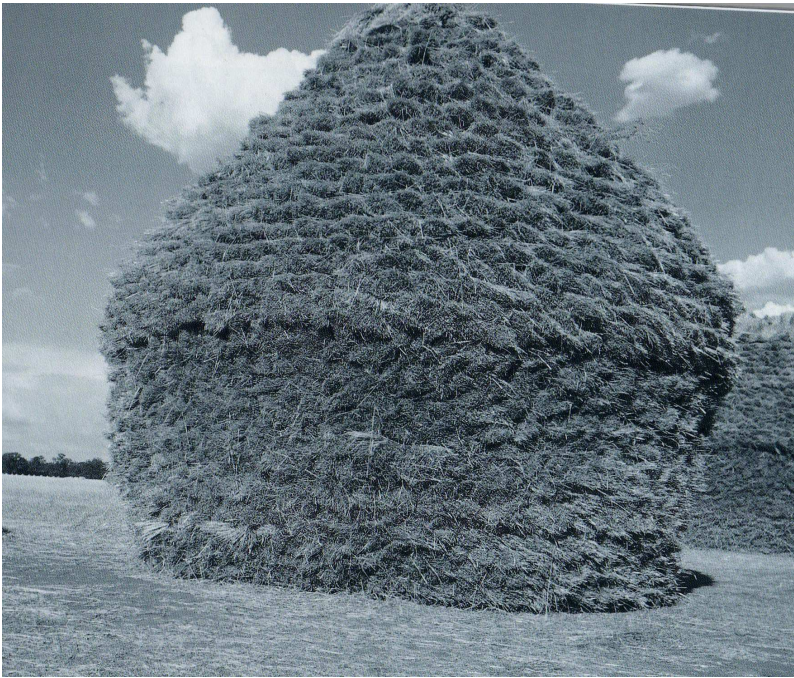
## **Feature Articles**

### **Hay Making by Ian Lester**

The basic principle behind hay making is to preserve and store excess fodder when it is available and feed it to animals when feed is in short supply. For simplicity I will deal with two forms of hay making as they were practised in the past

**Oaten hay** This was grown as a crop, harvested with a reaper and binder and cut into chaff to feed animals mainly horses. To get good results the cultivation of the soil, the planting of the crop and the harvesting of the crop had to be well coordinated to take advantage of the weather and soil conditions. When the crop was mature with well formed seed heads and stems approximately 2' to 2' 6" tall (60 to 70 cm), the crop would be harvested. This was done using a reaper and binder pulled by a team 2 to 3 horses. The reaper and binder was mounted on steel wheels, the main one had cleats to give a good grip onto the ground and drove the moving parts of the machine. Mounted on the leading edge of the main platform was a system of mower blades which cut the stems close to the ground. Above the platform a series of rotary "beaters" pushed the stems back onto a moving canvas belt. This in turn carried them to an elevator consisting of two canvas belts that lifted them up to the binding mechanism. Here a bundle of parallel stems about 6" thick was tied with a single strand of sisal twine to form a sheaf which was then put on to the ground. A group of men following the binder would pick up the sheaves and stook them. The stooks consisted of a minimum of two rows of sheaves with their cut end on the ground and their seeded ends leaning against the other row. The stooks needed to be well ventilated to keep them dry. When dry enough the sheaves were transported to the stack for storage. The stack was constructed on a platform of old fence posts/wooden poles etc. This was done to stop the hay spoiling because of contact with the ground. A well constructed hay stack with the cut ends to the outside and a well formed top (like a thatched roof) is weather proof. The biggest problem was rats and mice who nest and feed in the oat seeds and often soil they hay.



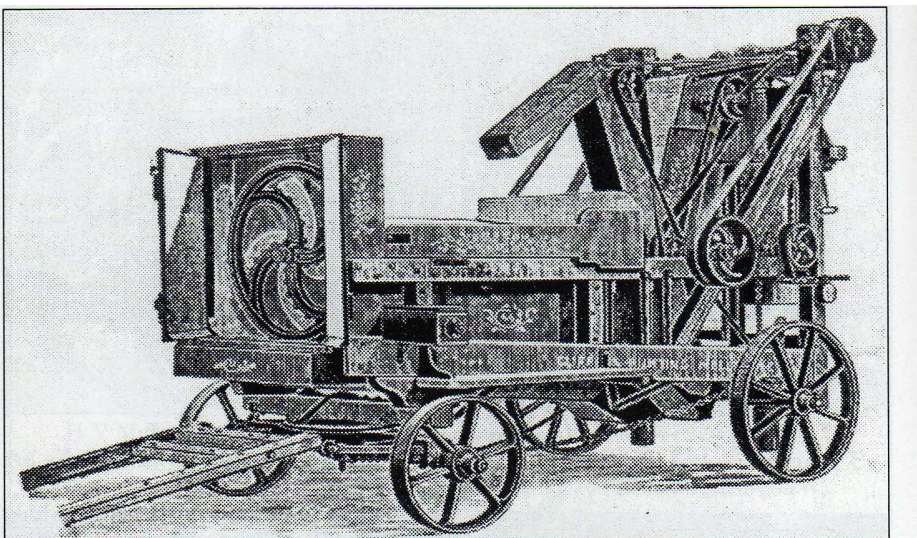


**A hay stack of sheaves**

When required a quantity of sheaves would be taken from the stack to a chaff cutter. This would cut the stems into pieces about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch long. The chaff cutter was engine powered and its main component was a flywheel that had about 4 sharp curved blades which rotated at about 50-100 RPM. The sheaves were placed on a sloping platform where the twine was cut and discarded. The main operator then pushed the sheaf into a chute and onto the feed rollers. These were loaded with a weight which maintained a positive grip between the roller and the sheaf. The operator needed good concentration to keep his hands clear of the feed rollers. Failure to do so would result in serious injury. The cut chaff was elevated from the cutter and put into hessian bags for transport to the place of distribution.

Horse teams transporting bagged chaff could consume 30% of the load before reaching their destination. A working horse would have a nosebag. This was a hessian bag reduced to half its length with a short rope attached to its upper edges. Chaff was placed in the bag and the rope placed behind the horse's ears. When the horse wanted to eat, it would lower its head until the bag was on the ground and take a mouthful of chaff which it could eat.

An article on the methods once used to make pasture hay will follow in a later edition of the Newsletter.



Cliff & Bunting, Blackwood street, North Melbourne, "Reliance" travelling chaff cutter with interchangeable knife wheel and double bag filler. This firm also made horse works, saw benches, grain crushers and straw presses.

## **Behind the Memorabilia by Lyn Skillern**

**In the Leongatha RSL there are on display artefacts which belonged to World War One servicemen. I looked for some information on these men on the National Archives Website.**

### **Horace Bair , whose prayer book is on display**

Horace was a horse breaker according to his file and his next of kin was Arthur Bair of the Otago Hotel Leongatha. He joined up on Sept 2nd 1914 and was placed in the 8<sup>th</sup> Batt. He was 5'8" tall, 155 lbs, had a bronzed complexion, light brown hair and grey eyes. He was 26 and 8 months  
Horace was at the Gallipoli landing with the 8<sup>th</sup> and became a Lance Cpl. On July 17, 1915 he was admitted to hospital with influenza. Returning to Anzac he was ill again and went to Lemnos. By January 1916 he was sent to England.

Horace went to France where he contracted mumps. He was in and out of hospital from Feb 1917 and was admitted to Larkhill a place for shell shock victims

Finally in Sept 1917 Horace is sent home a victim of DAH a serious heart problem. His resting heart rate was 120.

Sadly, Horace died in Leongatha in 1926 aged 38

### **Wilfred Griggs. Wilf is in a photograph on display. This photograph shows a number of local men and was taken in Egypt in early 1916.**

Wilfred enlisted on 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 1915. He was born in Allambee and lived his life in the local area.

When he enlisted he was 20 years and 4 months, had his parents consent, was 5'9" tall and 12 stone 4 lbs and had brown eyes and hair

He embarked on the 9<sup>th</sup> of March in 1916 and was wounded April 18<sup>th</sup>.

In 1916 he has influenza and pneumonia and is so ill his parents receive a telegram telling them to expect the worst. , Later they get another to say he was improving.

On 25/11/16 he was transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Anzac Mounted Regiment

By 21/4/17 he is in the NZ Division

Saw Mounted action and received a Military Medal on 3/8/18



**Wilf Griggs 1916**



**Rabaul War Memorial**

**Harris Victor Goller** (Rank Sadler Sergeant)

Harris who was also called Hec like his son enlisted on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1914 He was 27 years and 4 months, 6'1" tall, he had fair hair with blue eyes.

In 1916 he went to France via Marsailles

He spent most of 1916 in hospital in England including Larkhill. Harris returned to France in April 1917 and even had leave in Paris

On 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1917 he joined the 1st Div Australian Field Ambulance and was discharged in Feb 1919

Harris was living in Leongatha in 1921 when his medals were sent out to him. He served several terms as President of the Leongatha RSL, The Goller family were well known in the area and Goller's sport store in McCartin St was run by the family until quite recently..

**Bill Owen**

Major Owen, after whom Owen Street is named was a bank officer at The State Savings Bank Leongatha. This was where the Commonwealth Bank is today. His photograph is on the wall at the RSL. Bill was a popular officer in the local 22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Militia in the 1930's and, when War broke out in 1939 he transferred to the regular Army. Bill Owen became an officer in the ill fated 2/22 Battalion and many local men joined up and were placed in this battalion. Most were in A Company under Major Owen's command. The 2/22<sup>nd</sup> battalion was sent to Rabaul in New Britain in 1941 to try and protect the area, especially the harbour from Japanese attack. When the attack came on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1942 the small force at Rabaul was overrun. The men were told to escape if they could. Some of A Company were taken Prisoner, some died in the attack, others tried to make their way south and find a boat to go to Port Moresby. Six local men Bert Kuhne, Harry Milsom, Frank James, Tom and Bill Bellingham and James Butterworth were sadly massacred when captured. Owen Hughes, Phil Hillis and Dave Lawson were able to escape with Major Owen and returned to Leongatha not knowing what happened to the other men.

In June, 845 Australian soldiers, including many local men, and 208 civilians from Rabaul were loaded onto a ship called the *Montevideo Maru* to be taken to Japan. In the early morning of July 1<sup>st</sup> 1942, the ship was torpedoed by the USS Sturgeon. All 1053 prisoners locked in the ship's holds lost their lives On board the *Montevideo Maru* were local men, Jack Howard, Tom Sangster, Fred Broadbent, Fred Ketels, Jimmy Kavanagh, and Arthur Oliver.

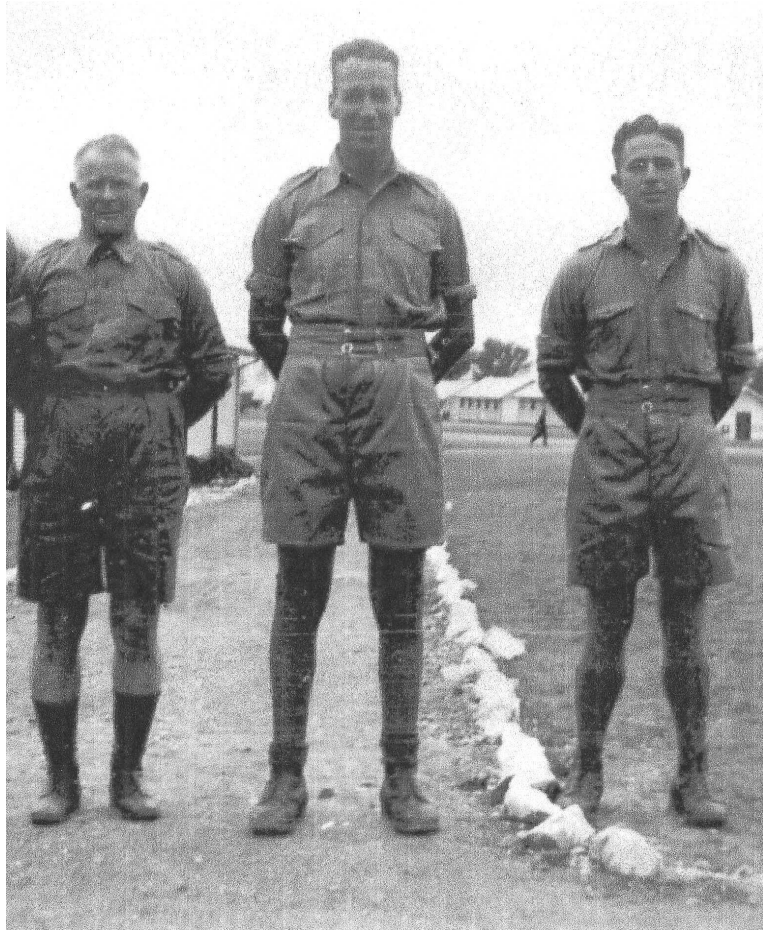
The portrait of Bill Owen, on the next page, was taken in 1940. The next passage is a summary of his career from the Australian War Memorial website.

Bill Owen was placed in the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion after Rabaul and became a Lieutenant Colonel.

Lieutenant Colonel William Taylor Owen DSC (Distinguished Service Cross) of the 39<sup>th</sup> Battalion came from Leongatha Victoria. He enlisted on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1940 at Caulfield. Lt Col Owen was taking part in close fighting with the Japanese on the Kokoda trail, in the most forward position at the most threatened point in the Seecamp sector, on the very lip of the plateau. He was throwing grenades when a bullet struck him. Lt Col Owen died on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1942, in Papua, aged 37 years. He was the first Australian to receive the American Distinguished Service Cross; this was gazetted on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 1944. Bill is buried in the Bomana Cemetery Port Moresby

Bill Owen it seems went from one bad situation in Rabaul to another in Kokoda. He died in action 6 months after the escape from Rabaul and 28 days after many of his men were lost on the *Montevideo Maru* .





**Tom Sangster Snr, Bill Owen and possibly Frank James 1941 (Doris Hickey)**



**Major Bill Owen 1940**

**Courtesy Australian War Memorial**

### **Dr Horace Pern**

Dr Horace Pern was a noted Doctor in Leongatha after the Great War. He was the first President of the RSL and his wartime medical Box is on display at the RSL. It is well worth a visit to the RSL to see this box and wonder at the basic equipment doctors had to work with in the 1914 to 1918 war.

Dr Pern was born in England on June 1<sup>st</sup> 1872 and when he enlisted in July 1915, he was 43 years and 1 month old. He was 5' 8 " tall and weighed 10 stone. His address was given as Yarram. After the war, Horace Pern lived and worked in Leongatha until his death in 1936. A Clock was placed on the front of the Memorial Hall in his memory and in recent times, Pern lane was named in his honour.

### **Leongatha High School Visual Honour Roll**

Lyn Skillern still has three presentations to go in order to complete the project. The men for whom we have no photographs are Bobbie Burns from Loch, Lyndley Craven, the son of an ANZ bank manager in the 1920's and Frank James. You will see from an earlier photograph in the newsletter that we have a photograph of a man who may be Frank but none with a definite identification. If you can help please let Lyn know.

**Leongatha High School Centenary** There will be a celebration of 100 years of secondary education in Leongatha in 2012. A preliminary meeting to start the planning will be held at Leongatha Secondary College on June 11<sup>th</sup> at 8 pm in the staff centre. Anyone interested is welcome to attend.

**Lap Top Computer** The Leongatha Historical Society has a lap top computer. Members can use this for any history work they are undertaking. Even that old Luddite himself, Ian Lester, has started writing up articles on the computer. There is a booking sheet on the notice board and Lyn or Lola will help show members how to use it. Lyn is still learning how to make the film stories, that will come!!!

**Anzac Recipes** Johanna Haasjes has compiled a great recipe booklet of Anzac biscuit and soldier's cake recipes. This is a must for any cook. They are available at the rooms or by order from the secretary.

Al Whitmore also did the illustrations for this booklet. Thank you Al.

### **Guest Speaker in June**

The June meeting will be held on Tuesday June 17<sup>th</sup> at 8 pm at the Mechanics' Institute. The speaker will be Bronwyn Lowden who will talk about the history of Mechanics' Institutes. All welcome

### **Recent donations**

We have received some new photographs of Knox's Rockhill farm from Vicki Knox after her recent visit. Beryl Martin has donated some photographs and letters of Jock Martin from Mirboo who was killed in France in 1916. Jock was a cousin of Alan Russell who was also killed in 1916. A very nice souvenir of Leongatha from c 1913 was donated. Some of the photographs have not been seen before.

### **Stop Press**

**On Sunday May 11<sup>th</sup>, Geoff Michael was presented with a copy of the will of Peter Clement, father of Margaret Clement, the famous Lady of the Swamp. Richard Shears felt that we, the local historical society, should have a copy. This will, in due course, be on display in the front room.**

**We also received a copy of the new book by Richard Shears "Swamp, who murdered Margaret Clement?"**