

Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Preserving Our Heritage

Newsletter
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In This Issue

- Latest news
- What's in a name? by Lyn Skillern
- Lessons from the past: Spanish Flu and COVID-19
- Woorayl Shire losses World War Two - can you help us?



Latest News

The Annual Meeting Notice

At the moment the Annual Meeting of the Leongatha and District Historical Society is being set for Wednesday 14 October at 2 pm at the Leongatha Mechanics' Institute. Members will be emailed with details of this meeting when we know we can go ahead.

Emailed news and newsletters

We hope you are enjoying our extra newsletters as well as those from other groups and important news items related to our Society. Please email us on leongathahistory@gmail.com if you have information to include in our next newsletter.

What's in a name?



By Lyn Skillern

The study of the origins of place names is a fascinating one. Why were rivers and mountains given their names? Who named our towns? Were then named after a person? What do these words mean? Bob Newton of Korumburra has been working on the origin of street and road names in the former shires that make up the South Gippsland Shire for many years. He has produced two books so far, one on the former Shire of Korumburra and one on the former Shire of Mirboo. The Woorayl Shire and the old South Gippsland Shire (Foster) streets are works in progress.

Surveyor John Lardner named many places while surveying our region in the 1870s and 80s. He used the language of the Kulin people

Prominent Aboriginal place names of the South Gippsland area and their meanings are:

Allambee	to recline, seated, sitting, to sit on a seat, to sojourn, to remain a while
Buln Buln	lyre bird
Drumdemara	bottle, a flask
Dumbalk	bleak, chilly, frosty, ice, freeze, hail, frozen
Gunyah Gunyah	huts or shelters
Jeetho	depart, detach, send away, dismiss, exit, fly
Jumbunna	colloquy, conference, discourse, to tell, repeat
Kardella	possum, or 'I don't remember' (Queensland word)
Kirrak	kick
Koonwarra	swan
Koorooman	kangaroo, or cattle
Kongwak	catch, to stop
Korumburra	maggot, blowfly
Leongatha	cheek-tooth, dental, relating to the teeth, tooth
Mardan	bewail, cry, weep, doleful, pain, gloomy sullen grief, groan, lament, unhappy, moan, sob, wail
Meeriyian	moon, lunar, relating to the moon
Mirboo	kidneys, reins
Nerrena	name
Tarwin	(from darwhin) thirsty, or fruit of creeper
Wonthaggi	borne, drag, to pull along, get, bring, haul
Woorayl	lyre bird
Wooreen	lips. ¹⁹

KOOROOMAN.

A large and representative gathering took place on Saturday afternoon, to consider the name of the township. Mr J. N. Horn occupied the chair. This place has been known as both Koorooman and Leongatha, and much confusion has been caused thereby. Three delegates (Messrs Shingler, Hassett, and Hayes), representing Koorooman, Leongatha, and the township itself, were appointed to consider the advisability of a new name being chosen, and after a short absence these gentlemen announced that they had agreed to an entirely new name, that of Avondale. This met with approval, and a petition in accordance therewith was prepared and extensively for presentation in the proper quarter.

(Port Phillip people) to name parishes and townships in West and South Gippsland. Names such as Koorooman, Leongatha, Korumburra, Dumbalk, Mardan, Kirrak, and many more have this origin.

The names of our rivers and mountains were predominantly given by early explorers. Angus McMillan is responsible for naming the Macalister, Thomson and Mitchell rivers to name but a few. Lachlan Macalister was his employer. He named the Thomson river in honour of Sir Edward Thomson, the Chief Secretary of the Colony of New South Wales. The Mitchell was named after Major Mitchell, the Surveyor General of New South Wales. Mitchell is better known as an explorer and European discoverer of the Western District

of Victoria.

That other Gippsland explorer Paul Strzelecki named the Latrobe River after the Lt Governor of Port Phillip and Gipps Land after the Governor of New South Wales. Angus McMillan had previously named Gippsland, Caledonia Australis, after his homeland Scotland but Gipps preferred Gipps Land and the rest is history. My Year 8 students studying local history always commented on what a mouthful South Caledonia Australis would be.

Strzelecki is famous for climbing and naming Mt Kosciuszko, Australia's highest mountain, after one of his countrymen, a Polish patriot.

In 1798 George Bass discovered and named Western Port. James Grant commanded *The Lady Nelson* and surveyed the bay in 1801. He discovered and named Churchill Island and had his men clear a piece of land and plant a crop of wheat. He also gave Phillip Island a name, Snapper Island. The Frenchman Nicholas Baudin led an expedition in 1802 that was dedicated to researching the Australian coast. The captain of *Le Naturaliste*, one of Baudin's ships sent a small boat into Western Port and the men spent eight days circumnavigating the large northern island in the bay. They named this 'Ile Francais'. They then named Phillip Island 'Ile Anglais'. Nicholas Baudin also named Venus Bay supposedly after the trading vessel *The Venus* used by George Bass. Then there is the name Tarwin. It is a river, as we know, but Tarwin was also a station on the Great Southern Railway between Koonwarra and Meeniyan. The address Tarwin was used by people living in the area near the station. Middle Tarwin was on the river between Tarwin and the Tarwin Lower. Tarwin Lower being the settlement near the mouth of the Tarwin River. The river was named using the Bunurong word for thirsty. Sam Anderson, who had settled on Western Port in 1835, explored the country east of his homestead with his friend Mr Thom in 1840. They discovered Anderson's Inlet and the Tarwin River. In a letter to

Governor La Trobe, Anderson suggested the new river be called the La Trobe River but Strzelecki had got in first.

In the Great Southern Star on 23 August 1890 a survey was included and readers were asked to choose whether they preferred Leongatha or Koorooman. Twenty- four voted for Koorooman and only four preferred Leongatha.

In an article found on TROVE by John Hyett, the naming of Leongatha is discussed. John Lardner surveyed the Parishes of Koorooman and Leongatha in the 1880s. He also surveyed townships. The settlement of Koorooman was to be on the ridge that is now called Leongatha North. This was the area centred around where the Leongatha North tennis courts are located today. As with Mirboo North and Poowong, Lardner placed the settlements on the ridges. This site, however, was unsuitable for a railway and Lardner surveyed another township at the point where the surveyed track from Morwell to the sea at Inverloch crossed the proposed route of the Great Southern Railway. When the town was first established both names, Koorooman and Leongatha, were used. The article attached refers to a meeting held to decide on the name. Avondale was the name three of our noted citizens suggested. What a suggestion! We do not know why. In the *Great Southern Star* on 23 August 1890 a survey was included and readers were asked to choose whether they preferred Leongatha or Koorooman. Twenty- four voted for Koorooman and only four preferred Leongatha. Later that year on 22 November 1890, ratepayers decided on Avondale at the public meeting referred to in the attached article. A petition was drawn up, signatures obtained and sent to the appropriate authorities. *The Government Gazette* on 5 December 1890 proclaimed that the township be called Leongatha. In 1891, the post office, banks and police station used the name Leongatha. It is pleasing that the people in charge of place names wanted Leongatha. They also preferred Bena over Cromwell.

Why did we have the name Woorayl Shire? It is a confusing name which does not give any indication as to its location to anyone outside of South Gippsland. At a meeting of delegates associated with the proposed new shire in 1887 much discussion was held on an appropriate name for the shire. Aboriginal names were discussed and a vote taken. Woorayl received four votes, Tarwin four votes and Sassafras two votes. On a final vote Woorayl meaning *Lyrebird* was chosen by a majority of one. (Murphy, John *No Parallel* p 49.)

We look forward to Bob Newton's next two books to tell us much more about this interesting subject.

Attached is a list of indigenous place names used in South Gippsland. Do you know any others? Please let us know.

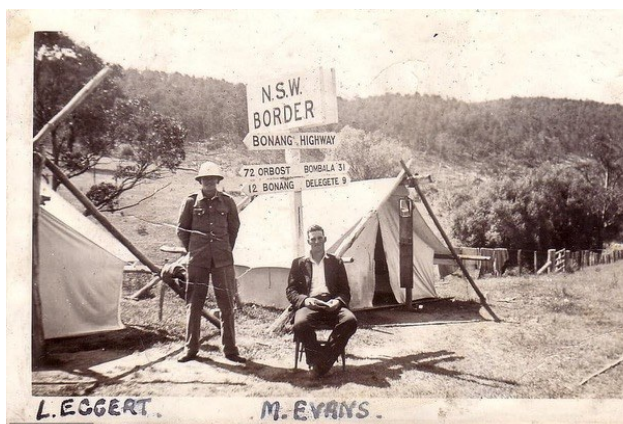
Lessons from the past: Spanish Flu and COVID-19

By Lyn Skillern

The 1918–1919 pneumonic influenza pandemic stands as one of the greatest natural disasters of all time. In a little over a year the disease spread world-wide affecting hundreds of millions of people and killing between 50 and 100 million. When the disease finally reached Australia in 1919 it caused up to 15,000 deaths. In Victoria it was estimated that 40% of the one and a half million people were infected causing 3561 deaths. There were many more deaths in the second wave and there was a small third and fourth wave. While the death rate here was lower than in many other countries, the pandemic was a major social tragedy, affecting the lives of all five million Australians.

The disease broke out in Europe towards the end of World War 1 and spread rapidly into the United Kingdom and beyond. The virus did not originate in Spain but is believed to have travelled to the Western Front with troops from the USA. After the war ended in November 1918 troops started going home and spread the virus to the USA and countries of the British Empire including Canada, India, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand and many of the colonies in Africa. Troops returning to Australia unfortunately brought the disease with them. Quarantining all returning troops would have been unthinkable. These men had been away for so long and just wanted to go home. Some attempts were made to quarantine troops from vessels with the disease but this was unsuccessful as men broke quarantine. The first case occurred in Melbourne in January 1919 and spread rapidly as people travelled by train around Victoria and other states.

The Australian Government had seen the serious impact of the disease in New Zealand, Samoa and Fiji in late 1918 and sent medical assistance to Samoa. The Commonwealth Serum Laboratory had developed an anti- bacterial vaccine which was used in Samoa and on the crew of the vessel taking the medical aid. This vaccine did not prevent the influenza but did possibly help prevent the pneumonia associated with the disease. The vaccine was then used throughout Australia with limited affect. Medical trials were not as vigorous as we have in 2020.



1 - East Gippsland Victoria/NSW Border Crossing 1919



2 - East Gippsland Victoria/NSW Border Crossing 2020

In November 1918 the Australian states entered into an agreement for cooperating and dealing with the threat. There was no Commonwealth Health Department and the states soon went their own separate ways when dealing with the issues that arose. Borders were closed and coastal shipping restricted. Tasmania cut itself off from the mainland and they remained the least affected State. Western Australia impounded the Transcontinental Railway and placed the passengers in quarantine. Queensland stopped the trains going over their border as well. Maritime quarantine slowed the rate of infection but impacted massively on the economy. Reducing the movement of coal around the country caused many problems. In all states, schools were closed as were theatres, churches, sporting events and any event where crowds could gather. Mask wearing was compulsory and people with symptoms isolated. The Exhibition Building was turned into a large hospital and many schools were also converted for this purpose. The health resources of the day were quickly overrun. Many young women volunteered to act as nurses and medical students were out in the community doing what they could. Without this volunteer workforce and the sense that sacrifice was required to defeat the disease, the Australian situation would have been much worse. There were of course many out there coming up with quack cures and prevention methods but there did not seem to be people who thought the pandemic a hoax. In Leongatha as in other rural areas, the local Shire Health Officer had the say as to local rules designed to reduce the spread of the disease. The 1919 Agricultural Show planned for February was cancelled as well as race meetings and the weekly picture show. Special regulations applied to church services, and the community was advised to avoid crowds if possible. The billiard room at the Mechanics' Institute was closed for a time, but after representations were made to the Health Officer Dr Wood, it was opened on condition that all windows were left open and attendance limited to twelve. The window opening must have been difficult as the only windows in the billiard room are in the skylight. Strict quarantine provisions were introduced and all cases had to be reported to the Shire Secretary. A committee was formed with Dr Wood in charge and they arranged for each section of the town to be patrolled to ensure that the rules were implemented. Some school buildings were used as temporary hospitals. This did not happen in Leongatha but Korumburra Primary School was used as a hospital. A suggestion was made to use the Leongatha High School building as a hospital but Health Officer, Dr Wood, considered it was better to nurse patients in their own homes. He approved the payment of Voluntary Aid Detachment helpers to assist with this task. Fortunately, these precautions prevented a general outbreak in the Woorayl Shire.



3 - Nurses in Korumburra during the Spanish Flu pandemic

When schools were re-opened on 10 March, the worst of the outbreak had passed although isolated cases continued to occur in the district. A young returned soldier, Douglas Curnick, after spending four years overseas with the army, died as a result of pneumonic influenza. He was nursed privately at the home of Frank Lester of Koorooman East and he received excellent care from Dr Horace Pern who made fifteen visits to Douglas during the course of his short illness. By July Dr Wood reported that there had been seventy cases of influenza in the Shire of Woorayl with only two deaths.

One hundred years on we have Covid 19 and there are many similarities. Australians have been asked to give up their normal lives to control the impact of the virus. There is no useful vaccine or cure and we have to rely on quarantine, supportive medical care and the goodwill of the community to win the fight. In 1919 however the virus affected around 1/3 of Australia's five million people with up to 15,000 deaths. This was the equivalent of one year of deaths on active service in WW1. The main group affected by the pandemic were males aged between 20 and 40. The impact was enormous and there was great fear for the future. The people of 1919 did not have mobile phones, computers and television. They were isolated without modern communication.

What are the lessons of 1919?

- Do not relax the isolation rules too soon. In both Melbourne and Sydney there was a massive increase in deaths in the second wave.
- Communities must support each other and take the pain for the good of all.

Woorayl Shire losses in World War Two - Can you help us?



As has already been reported we received a grant from Veterans Affairs to place the stories of our WWII military losses on our website and make a photographic presentation of these men and women.

The following is a list of names of people from Woorayl Shire who died as a result of WW11. As part of the research required for our WWII commemoration project we need photos and information on those listed below.

Fortunately, we have already researched the men from the 2/22nd Battalion and those who attended Leongatha High.

This is a list of those from Woorayl Shire who died as a result of WWII

Aitkin Robert A.	2/23 rd Battalion El Alamein	Tarwin Lower	photo
Anderson Stan P	2/14 th Battalion New Guinea	Tarwin Lower	photo
Bair Robert.	2/14 th Battalion North Borneo	Leongatha	no photo
Barguss Robert	13 th General Hos Burma Railway	Koonwarra	photo
Beecroft Robert	2/24 th Battalion El Alamein	Meeniyen	no photo
Bellingham Tom	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Nerrena East	photos
Bellingham Bill	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Nerrena East	photos
Boag David	22 nd Battalion New Guinea	Tarwin Lower	no photo
Bowden Laurie*	RAN HMAS Sydney		
Brisbane Thomas*			
Bristol Edgar*			
Broadbent Fred	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Leongatha	photo
Brown Eric+	RAAF Air crash England	Leongatha	photo
Buckley Paul	13 Armoured Regiment	Buffalo	no photo
Butterworth Harry+	2/12 th Battalion New Guinea	Leongatha	photo
Butterworth Jim.	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Dumbalk	photo
Chisholm Donald*			
Colbert Edward	2/2 nd Pioneer Battalion Syria	Leongatha	no photo
Coles Leslie	13 th Gen Hospital Singapore	Milford	no photo
Henry Due	2/7 th Battalion Townsville	Leongatha	no photo
Edwards Herbert	27 Brigade Coy, Aust A S Corps	Meeniyen	no photo
Egan Clement	2/32 nd Battalion New Guinea	Inverloch	no photo
Egan Richard*			
Ferguson Sydney	2/23 rd Battalion North Borneo	Dollar	no photo
Field John	2/21 st Battalion Ambon Indonesia	Ruby	no photo
Furmston Mavis	Nurse AAWMS POW Melbourne	Leongatha	poor photo
Grabham Arthur+	RAAF Shot down over Europe	Kongwak	photos
Howard Jack +	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Leongatha	photos
James Frank +	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Leongatha	photos
Johnson Stanley*			
Jones Frederick	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Tarwin Lower	poor photo
Kavanagh Jimmy	Lark Force Rabaul	Leongatha South	photo
Ketels Cliff	2/5 th battalion New Guinea	Leongatha	photo
Ketels Fred	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Leongatha	photo
Keys Martin +	22 nd Battalion New Guinea	Meeniyen	photo
Kuhne Albert	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Mardan/Meeniyen	photo
Lincoln Harold	RAAF Victoria	Leongatha	no photo
Mahomad Robert	2/2 nd Pioneer Battalion Syria	Leongatha	no photo
Maxted Des +	RAAF New Guinea	Leongatha	photos
McDonald Hector+	RAAF Indonesia	Meeniyen	photos
Millsom Harry	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Tarwin/Koonwarra	photos
Mitchell Jim +	2/29 th Battalion Burma Railway	Leongatha	photo
Moloney Laurence	2/2 nd Commando Battalion.	Leongatha	no photo
Oliver Arthur	Lark Force Rabaul	Leongatha South	poor photo
Owen Bill	2/22 nd Bn Rabaul and 39 th Bn New Guinea	Leongatha	photos
Payne Thomas +	2/2 Pioneer Battalion Indonesia	Leongatha	photo
Peddle Claude.	2/1 st Armoured Division	Mt Eccles	no photo
Pollock William	2/23 rd Battalion El Alamein.	Buffalo	no photo
Poulton Tom +	RAAF shot down over Europe	Leongatha	photos
Prowse Horace	2/23 rd Battalion New Guinea	Dumbalk North	no photo
Rae John	2/2 Pioneer Battalion POW?	Allambie	no photo
Richardson William	2/2nd Pioneer Bn Burma railway	Meeniyen	no photo
Ryan Leslie.	A.C.M.F. 39th Infantry Battalion Koko	Leongatha	no photo
Sangster Tom	2/22 nd Battalion Rabaul	Leongatha	photos
Scott Rowland	RAAF died on leave in Leongatha	Mt Eccles	no photo
Simmons John	2/21 st Battalion Ambon Indonesia	Mt Eccles South	no photo
Stephens Hector*			
Talbett Keith	2/108 Gen Tran Coy. Alice Springs.	Leongatha	no photo
Taylor Max +	RAAF shot down over Europe	Leongatha	no photo
Tiller William	2/5 th Battalion New Guinea	Dollar	no photo
Trotman Harry +	26 th New Zealand Battalion Libya	Leongatha/ New Zealand	
Uren Oswald	2/21 st Battalion Ambon Indonesia	Fish Creek	no photo
Waide Daniel	Army Postal Service Leongatha	Leongatha	no photo
Watson Ronald	22 nd Battalion New Guinea	Leongatha Wheelans	no photo
Wightman Mitchell	2/21 st Battalion Ambon Indonesia	Leongatha	photo
Wise Trevor	RAAF New Guinea	Leongatha/Lang Lang	photo

*best option for a deceased service person on our honour roll with the family name and initial. They do not seem to have a connection to Woorayl Shire.
+ On the Leongatha High School Honour Roll

Contact Us

If you would like to get in touch with us, we would love to hear from you.

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Visit us on the web at www.leongathahistory.org.au

