

Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Preserving Our Heritage

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Latest News

Ann Roughead

This year's grand final had Ann Roughead of Leongatha in the news. As the grandmother of Jarryd and Jordon Roughead she has had a grandson in 4 out of the last 5 premiership teams. A very nice article appeared in *The Age* and she was on television as well.



Displays

There will be some changes to the World War I exhibition to reflect the events of 1917. There will also be a display to acknowledge the fall of Rabaul in 1942 and the subsequent loss of so many local men who were in the 2/22nd Battalion. January 23rd marks the 75th anniversary of the fall of Rabaul.

Recently Andrew Lawson came into the rooms with a photo album, a leaflet dropped by the Japanese telling the soldiers to surrender and a small diary that told the story of his escape with two other locals. We were very excited to be able to use this material.

The story of the fall of Rabaul

A book is being written to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the fall of Rabaul in January 1942 and the loss of so many men and women. Lyn Skillern has worked in conjunction with the families of the lost men to contribute articles about those from our area who lost their lives while escaping from the Japanese, or on the POW ship the Montevideo Maru when it was sunk in July 1942. Photographs have also been provided by family members and the Society.

Escape, from the diary of David Lawson

A summary by Lyn Skillern

In 1941 the 2/22nd Battalion went to Rabaul. Leongatha and district had 17 soldiers in the Battalion. Of these 6 went down on the Montevideo Maru, a Japanese ship carrying prisoners of war to Japan, when it was sunk on 1 July 1942, six others were shot by the Japanese, one was later killed at Kokoda and three came home. One soldier was sent back to Australia ill and nothing is known about his life. Recently Andrew Lawson, the son of survivor Dave Lawson, brought Dave's diary into the Society, this tells the story of his escape. Dave Lawson, Owen Hughes and Phil Hillis escaped together and survived.

David Lawson's diary starts on January 20th 1942.

On 20 January 110 Japanese bombers and dive-bombers came over and bombed the aerodrome, harbour and petrol dumps. Five Wirraways (Australian aircraft) were shot down. Bombing continued for two days and the Japanese landed at 2.30 am on 23 January. Our soldiers started attacking them with mortars and machine guns. Five Japanese aircraft carriers and fifty other vessels entered the harbour. The Australians were told at 8 o'clock to withdraw to Four Ways. They had a hard time climbing up from the beach and were shelled from the boats. The men were forced to camp on the ridge overnight in heavy rain with no tucker and failed to make Four Ways.

In the next few days they met up with others, collected bully beef and biscuits and went bush. They were split into groups of 10 and were told to go southwest. It was fortunate that they had a compass. It was heavy going through the jungle and they had to ration the bully beef to 4 tins a day for 11 men. On 27 January they came to village where they had their first hot meal in five days. It consisted of pumpkin and a can of meat and vegetables. The men continued through jungle on old logging tracks and along rivers. They obtained food like paw paw, nuts, pigs and fowls from villages and were guided to good tracks by locals. Rain sandflies, mosquitoes and the fear of being captured were just some of the problems faced. They got lost and even ended up back where they started four days earlier.

The men travelled up mountains and over rivers in canoes. Every now and then they met other parties and some men were in a bad way with malaria and exhaustion.

By the end of February the men were being transported from New Britain to other small islands eventually landing on mainland New Guinea in March. At a place called UMBOI they stayed for two days. Food was good and a bottle of beer was made available to all the men.

Our men were well treated at missions and villages as they walked the 100 miles to Ramu climbing up high mountains and hacking through thick grass. Dave suffered from fever a few times but generally he was well. As the men went higher in altitude they were faced with flooded rivers and more thick tall grass.

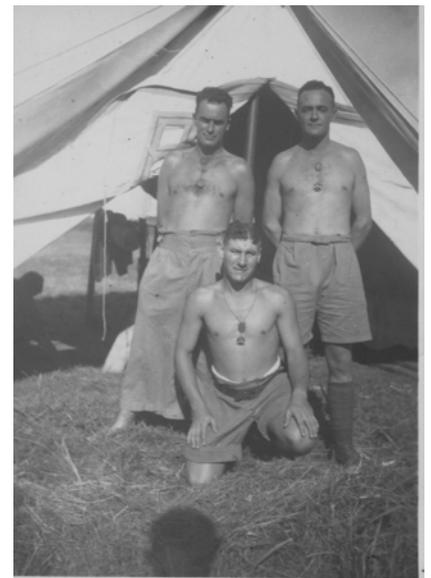
On 11 April they arrived in Ramu where they stayed the night and were given rations for a month. The next day they left Ramu at 7 am on their first step toward Hagen. Day after day they climbed moving from one village to another. By 22 April they were on the last stage to Hagen and ended the day by having an excellent meal with a Father Ross at a mission.

On 29 April they reached their destination and met up with other groups of men. Supplies were running low and they were living on kow kow. They were told they might leave by plane on 1 May but waited for men from Manus (Independent Company) who were on the track.

The great day finally arrived on 13 May. Two planes arrived in the morning to take 7 passengers each. At midday they left for Horn Island. From the plane they could see the Fly River and it was a wonderful sight. After landing at 3 pm they were taken by pinnace (a small boat using sails) to Thursday Island. They had good quarters in a disused pub and were given tobacco and a bottle of beer at the canteen. On 18 May the group set off to sail to Cairns arriving at 7 am on 22 May. A good day was spent in Cairns and they set off again at 9 pm for Townsville. By 26 May the men were in Brisbane where they were given pay and new uniforms. After 8 days and a Court of Enquiry they headed for home.

The diary ended on 26 May. The Great Southern Star (the Leongatha local paper) reported in June that Dave Lawson Phil Hillis and Owen Hughes were home after a terrible ordeal

Back – Harry Millsom
and Dave Lawson.
Front Frank James



Dave Lawson, Owen Hughes, unknown, Bert
Kuhne, unknown



Fuel in Leongatha - By Ian Lester

As motor vehicles developed during the late 1800's and early 1900's, so did the need to provide them with fuel. Early vehicle owners purchased their fuel in metal cans similar in style and capacity to those used to supply Kerosene which was used for lighting, heating and refrigeration. These cans held 4 gallons (20 litres) and were usually packed in pairs in wooden boxes. After the cans were empty, they would be cleaned and used for purposes such as carrying water and animal feed. Many of the boxes were used for storage and furniture construction.



As the used of horse drawn vehicles declined and motor vehicle numbers increased, particularly after World War 1, so did the need for better fuel distribution.

Early fuel bowsers were a metal box containing a manually operated pump which lifted fuel from an underground tank to a large glass bowl at the top of the bowser. When the bowl was full the fuel ran down from it into the fuel tank of the vehicle, if more fuel was required the process was repeated.

Because of the primitive nature of roads at the time and a lack of suitable transport vehicles, most fuel was transported by rail. Many rural towns including Leongatha had fuel siding where fuel from fuel tankers was transferred to storage tanks at local fuel depots before distributions to local retailers.

Of the two sidings in Leongatha one ran along the bank on the Bair Street side of the railway yards toward the over head road bridge for the Vacuum Oil Company. The pipes, stairs, a gate and sections of the original fence can still be seen behind the B.P Service Station in Bair Street.



The second siding ran off the main rain line near the Roughead Street level (road) crossing, running uphill past the livestock transfer yards and terminated near Law Casobies Engineering Works. (now Treacy Dairy Supplies) Behind the automatic toilet in Rotary Park. Fuel was transferred by gravity and pumps under the main line. Fuel for the shell Oil Co depot went under Hughes Street. Fuel for the Commonwealth Oil Refineries (B.P) depot was piped along the rail reserve, under Hughes Street. These pipes were removed c.1970 when fuel ceased being delivered by rail, due to improvements in roads and transport vehicles.

As an apprentice at Perry Motors (Later Gleeson Motors) I saw parts of this process first hand. Gleeson Motors were a large Holden Dealer and B.P agents. Fuel was delivered by road tanker from the depot and placed

in storage tanks under the show room and footpath. Fuel was pumped from these tanks to kerbside bowsers in Super and standard form. Engine oil was delivered in 44 gallon drums (200 litre) and transferred to storage tanks using compressed air other lubricants, gear oil, grease etc were delivered in 5 gallon and 12 gallon drums (20 and 60 litre)

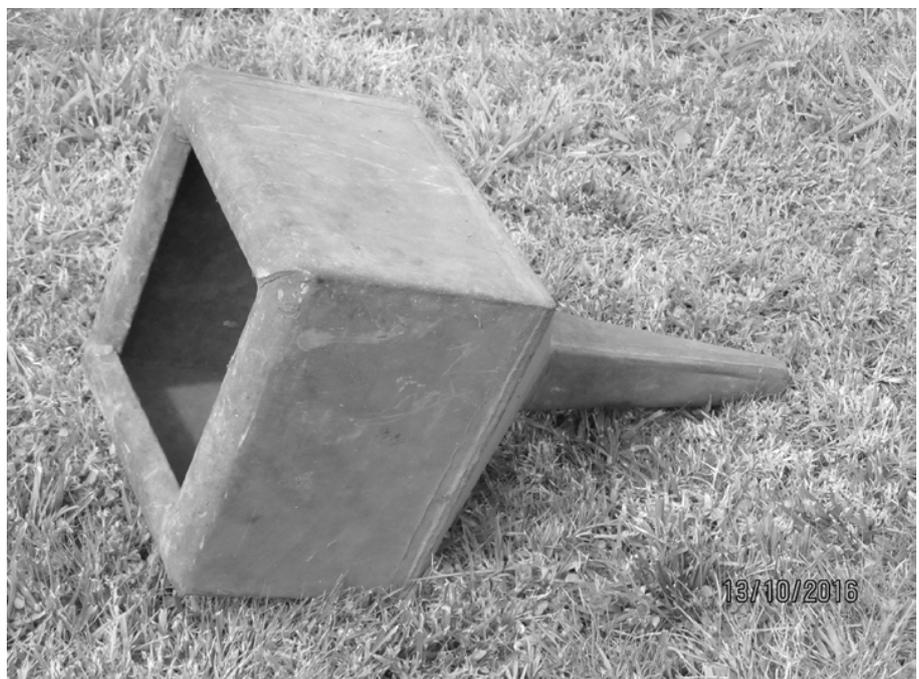
I grew up on a farm, all fuel used on it such as petrol and power kerosene was delivered in special 44 gallon drums of heavier gauge steel with additional reinforcing so that they could be dropped off a truck onto a truck tyre placed on the ground. The fuel was then pumped into vehicle fuel tanks with a manually operated pump.

During the 1950's an 800 gallon (1300) litres) underground tank was installed from which fuel was manually pumped into vehicles. Corrosion was a major problem with underground tanks and later farm fuel tanks were above ground so that fuel was transferred to vehicle tanks using gravity.



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Coming Events

The end of year Christmas lunch

Pat and Jim Spinks have kindly agreed to have our end of year lunch at their home again this year. This will be on Saturday November 26th at 12.00 at Hollyside on Canavans Rd Mt Eccles South. Members are asked to bring a salad, cold meat or sweet. Please tell Pat what you will be bringing by calling 56686365.

Summer opening times

The rooms will be closed from Friday December 9th and open again on Thursday January 5th 2017. Please come in and help

Australia Day

Our rooms will be opened on Australia Day January 26th from 11 am until 4pm

The history of businesses in the town

Please come in, look at the photos of businesses in the town and contribute any information you know about the businesses that have been on each site.

Please help

The Society is in need of help, we need people to take photos, catalogue items, arrange displays, carry out research or simply chat to visitors.

Guest Speakers

We need guest speakers if you have suggestions please let Lyn know and we will have a 2017 program ready for the February newsletter.

Book Sale

We have a number of novels for sale at the Mechanics' and will set up a sale in early December. Please come in and look at any time.

Tullaree Open Day

The Tullaree Homestead in Buffalo is having an open day on the 3rd and 4th of December. The McRae family has again given the community an opportunity to walk through and look at the home of the Lady of the Swamp and see the newest restorations to the historical Victorian homestead.

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 concession and are only available at:
www.trybooking.com/240786