



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Preserving our Heritage

Newsletter Volume 18 Number 5, November 2021

President: Robert Sage

Secretary: Lyn Skillern Mobile: 0400249048

Society rooms number: 56622492

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

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Latest News

End of year lunch

An end of year get together will be held at Bair's Otago Hotel on Wednesday 8 December at 12 noon. Please advise Lyn if you wish to attend.

Keeping the Historical Society rooms open

In order to open the Historical Society to the public we need help staffing the facility. Please give us an hour or two of your time in order to have the Mechanics' Institute open on Thursdays and Fridays from 12 to 4 pm. We will open from Thursday 13 January 2022 on Thursdays and Fridays if we have enough volunteers for Fridays.

Email leongathahistory@gmail.com or call 0400249048.

The Bair St Christmas Carnival

This Christmas event will be held in Bair St on Saturday 11 December from 5 to 8.30 pm. We will open our rooms and have a stall in front of the Mechanics' Institute from 5 pm. For sale will be history books, jams and sauces and second-hand books. Please come along and help us if you can

Cataloguing

We need help cataloguing the large back log. If you are prepared to learn about cataloguing, please let us know. It is not difficult. A cataloguing group will be formed in the new year.

The Annual Meeting

At the annual meeting held on 13 November the executive was re-elected for another year

President Robert Sage

Vice Presidents John Hyett and Rob Williams

Secretary Lyn Skillern

Treasurer Alan McGuinness

Archivist Pat Spinks

The President's Report 2020-21 by Robert Sage

It has been another very difficult year due to lock downs and restriction we have endured over the past twelve months. Even so the work of our Society has continued in a somewhat limited manner.

Although our meetings have been few in number, holding them in the afternoon has been very successful. It has been great to welcome a number of new members to our Society

Guest speakers at our meetings have included Peter Vanzuyden who spoke about his family in the Netherlands during the years of WWII and his experiences as a member of a migrant family coming to the area in the 50s. Richard Lester and Rodney Emmerson spoke about the history of Mossvale Park and the on- going work needed to preserve the park for the future. Bob Newton, a man who has a great passion for preserving history, told us a little of his life as well as the books he has written. His noted books are on the origins of place, road and street names throughout South Gippsland Shire. There will be four books, one for each of the former shires that make up the current Shire of South Gippsland. At our meeting Bob was presented a Gippland Region History Award for his work in recording this valuable information.

Our annual Anzac lunch at the RSL was very well attended. Lyn Skillern spoke about the service men and women who came from Woorayl Shire in WWII and ultimately lost their lives serving their country.

Despite the difficult year much good work has been done by the Society.

Following a presentation of a proposal to upgrade the Memorial Hall by Peter Western on behalf of Lyric Theatre, a letter of support from our Society was written to assist in their submission to the South Gippsland Shire.

Lyn Skillern has continued her research project to record the history of the men and women from the Woorayl Shire who enlisted for service in WWII and lost their lives. The stories are now on our website and a wall of photographs is on display in the hallway. This project was funded by a grant from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

A great deal of work and research was carried out by our members in setting up the exhibition on the emergency services operating in the district. A special thanks must go to Alan McGuinness and George Misson. I hope this display can be seen by members of the community when life returns to some normality.

With social media playing such a big part of modern living we receive many requests for information on personal and family history. Although responding to these requests falls mainly on one person, Lyn, I do feel it is of benefit to the Society to help people in this manner.

An annual report would not be complete without a list of thankyou's to members of the Society. To Lyn for another year of keeping us on the straight and narrow, carrying out all the duties of secretary, keeping us informed via emails and keeping us connected through the publishing of the newsletter throughout these difficult times. Thank you very much Lyn. To Alan, our treasurer, thank you for keeping our finances in hand for another year.

To all the members who have assisted in any way, setting up displays, manning the rooms when we have been able to open, assisting with the cataloguing of the collection and carrying out research. The list goes on and I thank you all.

Finally, I thank the members for giving me the opportunity to be your president over the past year.

VALE. Mavis Wightman

It was with great sadness that the community said farewell to Mavis Wightman who passed away on 19 September. Mavis was a great friend of our Society. She provided valuable information and many photographs and items of memorabilia for our collection. She also assisted with flower arrangements when relevant to displays including making fresh bouquets for our exhibition on weddings.

Mavis was born Mavis Myrtle Maxwell on 29 July 1923 in Leongatha. Her parents were Haswell (Barney) Maxwell and Janet Bell. She grew up on her family's farm at Leongatha South and attended Leongatha primary and high school.

After leaving school Mavis worked for Oliver Gilpin who ran haberdashery stores throughout Australia. She first worked at the Leongatha store which was located on the site of Smith's McCartin St shop. Mavis later worked in the Korumburra store and elsewhere in Victoria and Tasmania.

After WWII Mavis married Ken Wightman and they had five children Max, Jenny, Lester, Heather and Alan. Ken and Mavis lived on the Wightman's farm and later in Parr St.

Mavis was a great gardener and floral artist. She was a long-term member of the horticultural society and the CWA. A hardworking volunteer Mavis assisted many groups in the district and will be fondly remembered for her generosity and good humour.



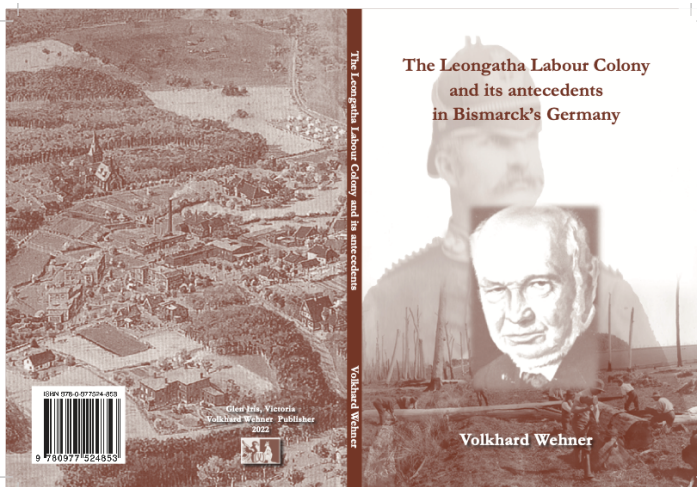
A Leongatha High Netball team from the 1930s. Mavis is at the end of the line. She said she was the shortest player.



Former Oliver Gilpin's staff Olga Robert, unknown, Mavis Wightman and Joyce Calder.

A new book on the Leongatha Labour Colony by Volhard Wehner of the University of Melbourne

During the past two years we have assisted Volhard in his efforts to write his book on the Labour Colony. In the new year, on a date to be determined, our Society will host the launch of this book and Volhard will give a talk to those present. Further information on this event will be circulated by email.



Heritage House

It was decided to post photographs of historic houses from the district on Facebook during history month in October. The popularity of these posts suggests interest in this subject. A project to research houses will be set up in the near future.

The following photos of her home in Jeffrey St were provided by Helen Barrow. This house, named Egerton, is a timber villa constructed by local builder F W Morris in the Federation/Queen Anne style in c1915. After living there for 18 months Morris sold the home to noted local engineer J T Knox. The Knox family resided there until 1974 when it was purchased by the Barrow family.



Wishing all our members and friends in the Gippsland history world a very happy Christmas and a much more prosperous and enjoyable 2022.

Membership form. For the Year 2021-2022

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 Bendigo Bank, Leongatha:
Leongatha & District Historical Society
BSB: 633000 a/c: 182712406

(Please include your name as reference,
and notify us by e-mail to leongathahistory@gmail.com
You can copy this form, paste it to a new document and email back to us. 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:

Address:

Telephone:

E-Mail: