



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Preserving our Heritage

Newsletter Volume 19 Number 4, November 2022

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Latest News

End of year lunch.

The Society's end of year lunch will be held on Wednesday 14 December at 12 noon at the Leongatha RSL. Please let Lyn know if you are planning to attend.

Fashion through the Ages

This fantastic exhibition highlighting a large range of clothing items from our collection was set up by Penny Clark. We are very fortunate to have such a young and enthusiastic member helping us. Please come along and see the exhibition.

Visit to Stratford.

In October a group of nine members travelled to Stratford to visit the Stratford historical Society. We enjoyed lunch at the local Pub and then had a most enjoyable visit to their museum. Some years ago, their historical society was able to purchase the former Methodist Church and grounds with funds donated by a benefactor. The church museum is very well set out and contains a wide range of items. They also have a large shed for storage and display of more items including machinery. An historic kitchen and living room have also been set up as part of the shed display. In all a very pleasant day was had by those who went.

Biketoberfest activities

We had a successful fundraising sausage sizzle in conjunction with the South Gippsland Genealogical Society during this local event. Thanks to Alan McGuinness, Deb Moloney, Graham Wightman, Rob Skillern, Johanna Haasjes, Pat Spinks, Lyn Skillern and genies Heather, Marg, Alison and Maree.

Lyn Skillern's book

'*Forgotten for too Long- the Gippslanders in Lark Force 1941-42*' is now complete. The book will soon be going to the printer. The launch will now be next year in February or March.

Society Raffle

We are currently running our Christmas raffle. The first prize is a \$100 gift voucher from AW Smith and Sons. Second and third prizes are a \$50 Wish Card from Woolworths. The raffle will be drawn on 16 December. Tickets are \$2 each or 3 for \$5. Thank you to Deb Moloney for organising this fund-raising activity.

Our Lola turned 90

In August our past President and long-term hard-working member Lola Bailey turned 90. Lola is seen here with her son Geoff at Woorayl Lodge. The other photo is of a very young Lola. Sadly, Lola has dementia and is no longer involved with our activities.



Pat Spinks celebrates two years of being 80.

Pat turned 80 in 2020 during Covid and decided to celebrate three birthdays in one on 8 October. Pat is seen cutting her cake with husband Jim looking on.



Recently Cody Everitt came into our rooms to have a look at the building and chat about his family history. The following article is about his great great grandfather James Radburn and his connection to Leongatha

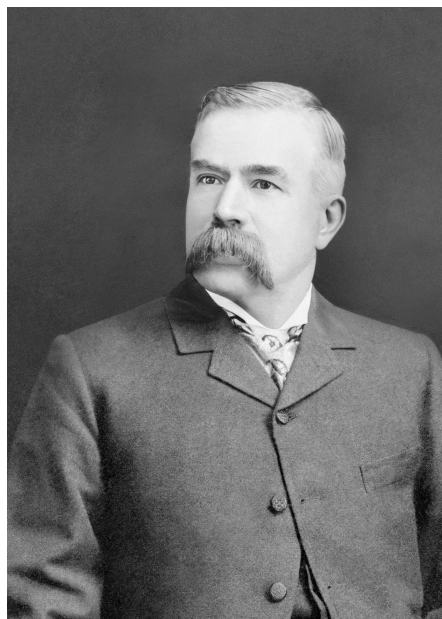
Yesterday evening I came across one of your posts, from about four months ago, on the Facebook page, regarding the old 'Steele House', which at one point was the home of Charles (1868 – 1953) & Amy Steele (1884 – 1959).

Amy Steele (née Radburn) was a sister of my great-great grandmother, Gertrude Radburn (1881 – 1974), who was married to Samuel Everitt (1877 – 1951) and lived in Toora.

Their father, James Radburn, spent the final days of his life in the care of his daughter, Amy, and passed away on the 16th of April 1940, at the Steele House, aged 86. He is buried in an unmarked grave at the Leongatha Cemetery.

I thought that it might be good to share an old photo of James Radburn with the society, as well as some brief information, as there are surely a lot of his descendants living in Leongatha today.

Unfortunately, I don't have contact with many of those descendants, but know that they include those belonging to that particular branch of the Steele family, as well as several descendants of the Everitt family.



James Radburn was born in Ryton on Dunsmore in Warwickshire, England, in 1853 and as a young man served in India with the 17th Regiment of Foot, from 1869 – 1877. Upon his discharge he returned to the city of Coventry where he joined the City's Police Force with whom he served with distinction, rising quickly through the ranks and being commended several times for bravery, from 1877 – 1886. In 1878 he had married his wife, Emily Husselby (1859 – 1913), and their first daughter, Gertrude, was born in 1881, and their second, Amy (later Mrs. Steele), was born in 1884. In 1886 they came to Australia, so that James could fill a vacant role for Victoria Police, in Port Melbourne, as they were short staffed and were requesting experienced officers from England. In 1894 he was transferred to the Gippsland Desk and took up a position in Bairnsdale, and from there in 1898 he was sent to Outtrim, to take charge of the station. During the subsequent years he had to deal with the miners' strikes in the region, which took a heavy toll on him, and in 1906 he retired from the Police Force. Like many other Outtrim settlers, he then selected land in Wonyip in order to try his hand at farming, with mixed results, as they were often burnt out by terrible bushfires which caused them to lose everything. He was a prominent figure in the local community there, however, and the sub-district called 'Ryton', in the parish of Wonyip, was named in honour of his birthplace in England – Ryton on Dunsmore. In 1912 he became a Morwell Shire Councillor for Boolarra riding. His wife, Emily, passed away in 1913 from an illness and in 1915 he lost a son, Edward (1896 – 1915), at Gallipoli, prompting him to attempt to enlist shortly afterwards, aged 62. He lied about his age and pretended to aged 44 years and 2 months, which he succeeded in doing, as he was very fit and appeared to be much younger than his age, but was caught out at the last minute. He was offered a position at the rear doing light duties in France, but turned this down as he wished to serve on the frontline. In 1916 he was appointed as a Justice of the Peace, and in 1918 he travelled to Canada and then England, where he again attempted to enlist into the army, with the same result. The ship that he returned to Australia onboard was the *R.M.S. Niagara*, which was one of the first to be quarantined due to an outbreak of the Spanish Flu onboard, but he never caught it.

In 1919 he was re-married at 65 to a woman named Eliza Finlay (1868 – 1964), and for many years they lived together in retirement in Daylesford, before he came into the care of his daughter, Amy, and lived with the Steele's in Leongatha.

James' other children include Clara; 1890 – 1979 (m. Patrick Ford), Philip; 1892 – 1966 (m. Jessie Winstanley), and Lucy; 1899 - 1957 (m. Samuel Swindells). Laura; 1893 - 1894 and James; 1894 - 1895, died in infancy.

VALE Mac Hall

Malcolm Victor Hall passed away in September after a long illness. He was 86

Mac was a member of our Society for over 25 years until ill health meant he could no longer be involved. His wife Audrey is a Life Member of our Society and served as Treasurer for 25 years. Mac will be remembered by many in Meeniyah where he was the SSB Victoria manager in the 70s.



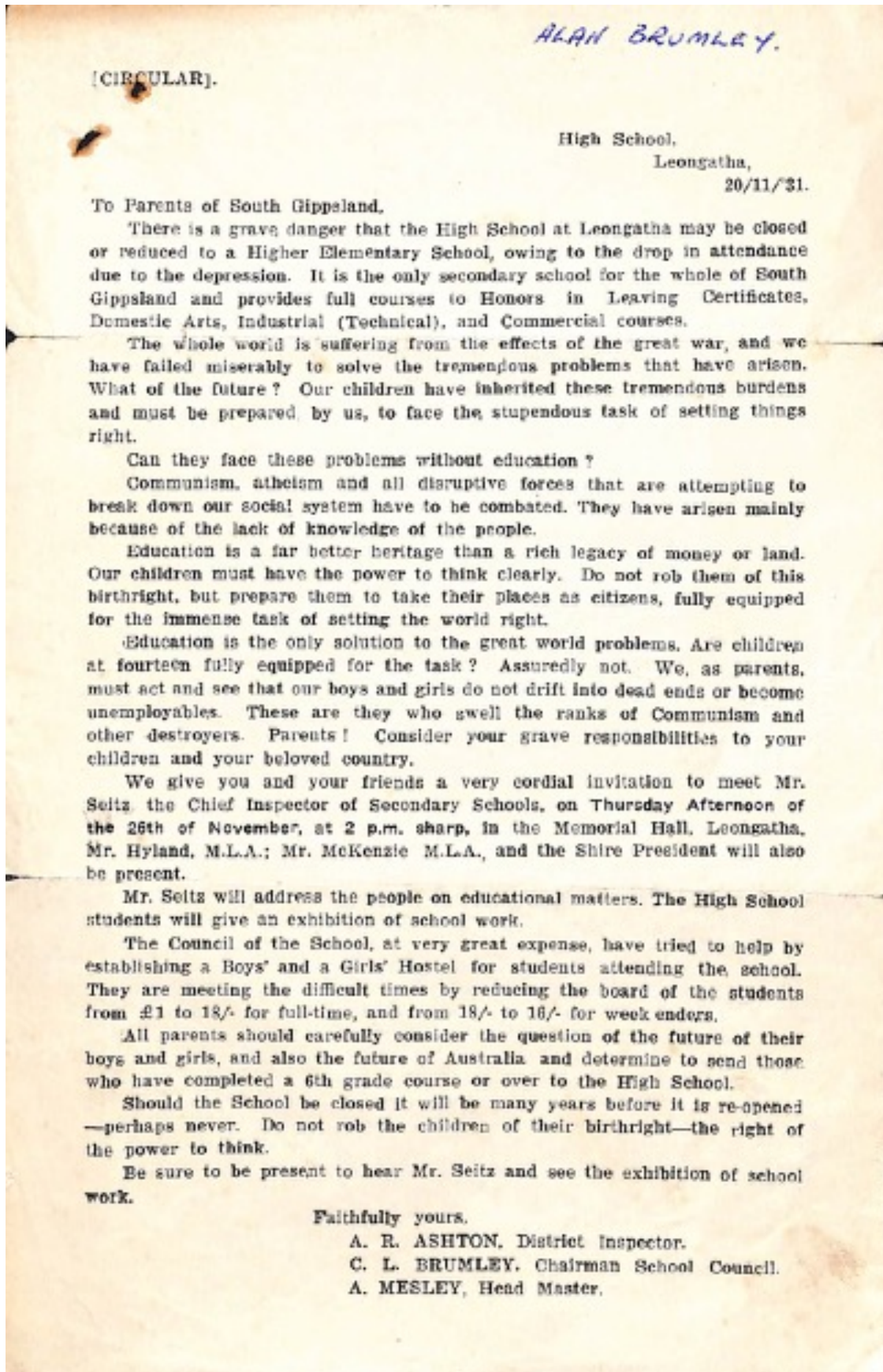
Electricity comes to Nerrena. 1964

It is difficult to imagine life without electricity but many small communities in Woorayl Shire had to wait until the 1960s for this service. We take electricity for granted now until the power is interrupted in some way. There was a ball in the Nerrena Hall to celebrate the electricity being turned on. Helen Wildes now Barrow was named Bellerina of the ball on the night. At our last meeting Helen had her photo taken with the sash.



From Craig Brumley

In 1931 Leongatha High was threatened with closure or a reduction in the number of year levels. Craig found this letter advising parents of the issue and a meeting with education officials and local MPs. That fight was won but another was to occur when a fire destroyed the school in 1933. It survived that threat as well to be rebuilt. That heritage listed building still stands.



The Leongatha Recreation Reserve, the early days. By Lyn Skillern

The Leongatha Recreation Reserve located in Roughead St Leongatha has served the community since the early 1890s. Recreational activities currently catered for are tennis, croquet, swimming, football, cricket, table tennis, basketball, netball, volleyball, golf, cycling, athletics, skateboarding, men's shed and of course passive recreation such as walking. Commonly called the Rec a large range of activities have been held there over the past 130 years. But how did this facility come about?

When the townships of Gippsland were first surveyed, land was always set aside for community recreation. Surveyor Lardner could not possibly have imagined the facilities that now occupy the recreation reserve. In his surveying of Leongatha 1888-89 Lardner surveyed two areas, one of 32 acres for a park and recreation reserve and 15 acres for show grounds. The people of Leongatha in 1892 were not happy with the choice of the area set aside. The Land's Department was asked to reserve an area north of the town in exchange for the swampy area already surveyed. They agreed, and 107 acres in Roughead Street were set aside for community recreation. This is the current site of the Recreation Reserve.

In March 1893 the site was placed under the control of a group of local businessmen Thomas Ridgeway, George Roughead, Robert Bair, Hugh McCartin and Dr Michael Carr. In order to establish a racetrack on the land, these trustees agreed to forgo land on the northern side of the reserve in exchange for a similar area on the southern side nearer the town. This arrangement meant that the size of the reserve was reduced to 81 acres, 57 for recreation and 24 for show grounds.

The land was natural bush and had to be cleared. In 1896 tenders were called for the cutting of scrub and timber on the reserve. Then in 1897 tenders were called for the ploughing and draining. This tender was only for the racecourse consisting of three to four acres of level land adjacent to Roughead St. Only a small oval was cleared at this time. This small oval allowed cricket and football matches to be played by local teams. The first cricket match occurred when the men from the newly formed Labour Colony challenged the local men. They defeated the town team by three wickets. The Labour Colony was an 800 acre experimental farm located on the land from Mary McKillop College to the old Leongatha High site. Here unemployed men from Melbourne were used to work the land in return for food, lodgings and a small salary. The clearing and sowing of the oval led to the formation of the Leongatha Cricket Club. This club played against Korumburra, Outtrim and Jumbunna.

A public meeting was held in 1894 at McCartin's Hotel to form a football club. By 1896 Leongatha joined *The Great Southern Football Association* consisting of The Black Diamonds (Korumburra), Strzelecki, Jumbunna and Outtrim. It is important to understand that Korumburra, Outtrim and Jumbunna were black coal mining towns with large populations of young men. A few years later Leongatha formed a league with Mt Eccles, Meeniyah and Tarwin Lower.

The first Agricultural Show note the tree ferns



The first Leongatha Turf Club race meeting was held in 1899 on Bair's paddock on Nerrena Road. A year later a race meeting at 'The Rec' was held on St Patrick's Day, 17 March with a crowd of over 600.

The first Leongatha Show was run by The Agricultural and Pastoral Society in 1903. In September 1902 arrangements were made to construct 50 cattle and horse pens, 150 sheep hurdles and the clearing of five chains (100 metres) of track on the show grounds. This Show had over 900 entries increasing to 1,300 in 1904. In 1905 it was a very hot day and the committee had arranged for the cartage of 3000 gallons of water to the reserve as well as copious amounts of beer and soft drink. By mid-afternoon there was only hot whisky and green ginger wine available.

During the years after WWI funds were raised to have a grandstand built. This was constructed of local bricks made in Koonwarra with building commencing in 1921.

There will be more about the Recreation Reserve in the next edition.

Membership Form - 2022-2023

The 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 at leongathahistory@gmail.com
You can copy this form, paste it to a new document and email back to us, or post to 10 McCartin Leongatha 3953

Cash and card payments can be made at the rooms.

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: