

Leongatha and District Historical Society

P O Box 431 Leongatha 3953



Newsletter

Volume 3 Number 4 November 2006

President : Geoff Michael

Secretary : Lyn Skillern Tel 56686304

The Society has a telephone now and you can call us on 56622492

on Thursdays and Fridays between 12 noon and 4pm

The latest news

Onions

John Murphy has been working on the history of onion growing and this manuscript is nearly complete. Funding will need to be sought in order to publish the book

Program for 2007 the program for 2007 appears at the end of the newsletter

Christmas/ End of Year Celebration This year we will have our celebration at the home of Johanna and Albert Haasjes at 35 Station Rd Koonwarra on December 1st. We will have a meal of cold meats and salad followed by sweets. All members and spouses are most welcome and are asked to bring a salad or sweet. You could bring along a family Christmas favourite food item. The committee will organise the cold meats. Please let Lola, Johanna or Lyn know what you are going to bring so we do not end up with too much of the one item. The evening will begin at 6 pm with a stroll around the Haasjes' garden.

Celebrating the life of the late Dolly Horn. Dolly passed away recently aged 96. The Society will hold an afternoon tea in her honour at the Mechanics' Institute on the afternoon of February 2nd 2007 at 2 pm. Members attending are asked to bring a plate. If you are in contact with friends of Dolly who are not society members please invite them to come along

Lions' Expo. This is on at the Leongatha Rec Reserve on Saturday and Sunday November 18th and 19th. We will have a stall at the expo selling our publications and preserves. If you can help on either day please let Margaret Stokes know on 56623492

Yarram Historical Society celebrates the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Roads Board the forerunner of the Shire of Alberton on November 22nd 2006. The original Shire of Alberton took in large areas of what became Woorayl Shire and is now South Gippsland Shire. Details of the days events are on the notice board at the Mechanics' Institute for anyone wishing to attend.

Guest Speaker November 21st The speaker at the meeting on November 21st will be Jack Edney. notable resident and businessman of Leongatha for many years and former head of the cemetery trust.

Feature Article

50 Years of the Leongatha Daffodil Festival

as told by Rodney Emmerson

The present Horticultural Society was started in 1948 and in September 1949 they had their first show. There had been other horticultural organisations prior to this. The Emmersons joined the Horticultural Society in 1951 after seeing the Horticultural Society's display at the Agricultural Show. The Horticultural Society had two shows a year an autumn show with dahlias and a spring show with daffodils. In 1951 there were 70 entries and in 1961 there were 820. The shows were crammed tight into the room which was in the old council chambers. After 1956 it was decided to expand the show and one of the reasons for the expansion was to raise money for the swimming pool, an interesting connection. There was an enormous amount of work involved in expanding the show from a 1956 flower show to the 1957 festival. The members visited daffodil growers in the Mornington Peninsula, The Dandenongs and the Warragul area and encouraged people to come. Murray Gardiner for example, came after a visit by Mr and Mrs Harvey. Ted Tyrrell the nurseryman set up a magnificent display on the stage and had interesting camellias, magnolias and the beautiful things gardeners love to buy. The exhibitors are very important to a show and needed to be looked after. Rodney still has a collection of clear glass sauce bottles used by exhibitors. These are only used for emergencies now. The Yallourn Daffodil Spectacular of 1972 was advertised but Rodney did not enter because entries had to be in by writing 7 days before the show. This meant the entry forms would have to be filled in and sent 9 days before the show. There were only 8 daffodils flower exhibited at the Daffodil Spectacular of 1972 and the loss of \$5000 had to be covered up by the local council. They did not do their homework.

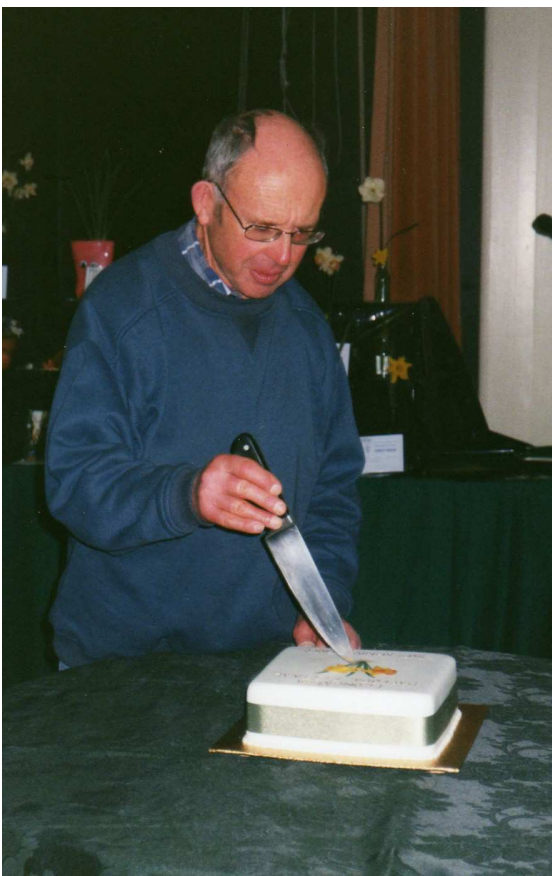


A field of daffodils looking towards Leongatha

The Leongatha Festival organisers were acting audaciously when they decided to turn a flower show into a festival in one year. There were finally after much effort eight different daffodil exhibitors. Mrs Robertson was one, the Robertsons had been flower growers and had

come to Leongatha in the early 1950's. The Brumleys also exhibited, Gladys Brumley,s brother Lou was one of the great Daffodil growers in the world. When he died there was an obituary in the Royal Horticultural Society's Year Book of 1956. At the time of his death he was just about to depart on a trip overseas. His son Graeme is still involved with the Daffodil Society as the secretary and lives in Monbulk. Gladys picked the daffodils from the block in Leongatha to take the flowers to show in Melbourne and Lou picked them from the block at Canterbury. Gladys would wire the daffodils in the kitchen and Lou would put them on the benches. In those times you were permitted to wire daffodils because they had weak floppy necks and you wanted them to sit exactly how you wished. Gladys was a master at wiring which is no longer allowed. The society had Gladys Brumley's expertise and also that of Mr Pullin the plumber from Korumburra who later retired to Inverloch. There was also Alf Ladson from Wandin, Murray Gardiner and Hancock and Co. Mr Hancock died but his wife continued to show magnificent daffodils for some years.

The schedule for the floral competitions has changed quite considerably over time. The range of camellias, daffodils and shrubs has expanded greatly. The daffodil categories have expanded a number of times since 1956. There was an open section, an intermediate section, a Leongatha members section and a novice section. They found that people did not like competing against the commercial growers. The open section was for commercial growers and anyone else who wished to enter that section, the intermediate was for those who do not want to enter the open. The word intermediate had to change because the term now means certain size of daffodil. There are standard daffodils, intermediate daffodils and miniature daffodils. The member section was only for members of the Leongatha Society who attend meetings and the novice section for others especially new entrants.

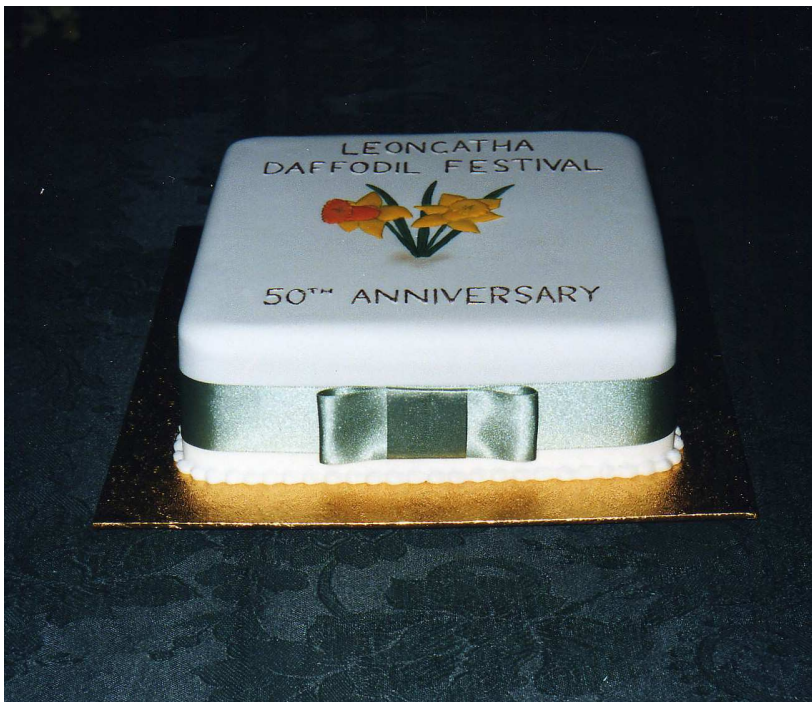


Rodney Emmerson cutting the 50th anniversary cake

The Brumley family grew daffodils near the corner of Turner and Horn Streets for nearly 100 years and some bulbs may still be there. Gladys would dig up daffodils if she new a house

was being built and plant them elsewhere. Some have been planted in front of the court house. One of the daffodils at that site is a "Gertrude Nethercote" which came from Gladys's place. Gladys knew Gertrude and her sister. Daffodils were planted around the town. Some are doing well especially where they were mulched. Others planted on the road to Korumburra have not been well looked after and need to be slashed and the weeds removed. It is difficult because we cannot tell Vic Roads what to do. There seems not to be enough interest in looking after our community daffodil plantings. It is quite different in Kyneton where the displays are magnificent.

In 1957 the decorating of shop windows started and has continued right through. In 1961 the Daffodil Princess and the Junior Floral Princess were crowned. The first festival was very successful and raised £500 in 7 years. In 1960 the show was taken to the Memorial Hall from the Recreation Reserve and in 1961 other organizations combined to extend the festival to one weeks duration. There were events such as church services, a procession, official opening, a garden party, a daffodil baby show, a variety concert and film evening in the Catholic Hall, three football matches for 14 year old boys, wild flower display, golf tournament, car trial or car treasure hunt and the international concert. The next year things were scaled down and by 1965 the only features that remained were the flower show and the princess competition.



The 50th anniversary cake made by Margaret Fox

Changes were made to keep the festival going. The flower show introduced camellias and Australian native plants and so on. Floral art was introduced and became popular with the introduction of floral art classes at Koonwarra. Rodney entered several daffodils in each class to provide competition and a good show. Margaret Miller and her parents started to exhibit in the 1960's introducing many beautiful daffodils to the show. With more categories many other people started to enter daffodils. Nancy Bruce, who has a nice collection of daffodils has entered as has Shirley Cornthwaite. Sue Thompson the Horticultural Society President regularly attends meetings of the Daffodil Society and there is much interest amongst local growers. Sue Thompson and Josie Rutherford are getting the finest daffodil pollen in Australia to put on their daffodils.

.Rodney got his first daffodils from a variety of people including Mr Pullin, from Hancock and Co and Travis Morrison. Rodney has not bought new variety bulbs since the 60's. 1972 was a bad year with many of the older organisers away. Rodney worked all night to get the exhibition set up. The wildflower display was organised by Mrs Lyndon originally and Mr Potter arranged for the organisers to go to his garden for flowers. Other groups became interested by this time including Rotary with their art show. In 1975 so many organisations wanted rooms that an organising committee was formed. By 1981 the committee fell apart and the horticultural society had to try and do all the organisation on their own. The Chamber of Commerce took a role but most of work is done by Rodney and his sister Joan Michael. The Daffodil Championships were in Leongatha in 1997 and will be again in 2008. Mr Kennett the Premier of Victoria and daffodil enthusiast opened the festival in 1996. There have been many highlights. The festival is continuing on and still attracts many visitors. Reaching the 50th show has been a great achievement by all concerned.

Feature Article

Transporting Timber *by Ian Lester*

As a follow up to my previous article on saw mills this time I will deal with the transport of logs from the felling site to the saw mill and the sawn timber away from the mill

In the early years of settlement most timber was processed at the site of the fallen tree because of the difficulty of transporting a heavy log. The requirements of the end product would dictate the size of the tree to be felled in both length and diameter. For example a bridge pile required a pole to be fairly long and about 30cm in diameter and was often used in the round. Logs that were larger in diameter would be cut to the required length with a pit saw or split into manageable pieces prior to transport

Bullocks or horses either solo or in teams were used to haul logs laying on the ground. Two problems were likely to occur when this method was used. Firstly the leading edge of the log would dig into the ground making it difficult to use. This problem could be solved by cutting a point onto the log and attaching the hauling chain to the point or by using a log shoe which was a curved steel plate with a hole cut into it. The hauling chain was then placed through the hole and around the log. Both methods provided a "ramp" which prevented the log digging in. The second problem was that the log was likely to roll sideways particularly on a slope and could catch on stumps, fallen trees and other obstacles. To prevent rolling the log could be supported on the leading end. With small logs a log shoe or a sledge would be sufficient. Larger logs could be broken down into manageable pieces or hauled by a two wheeled jinker which held the leading end clear of the ground. Horse or bullock hauled 4 wheeled wagons were also used to bring logs into saw mills



Log on a jinker being pulled by bullocks

Many mills developed tramway systems to bring in logs and transport sawn timber. Early tramways usually had wooden rails and trolleys with flanged wheels hauled by a horse. Later winches, gravity and small locomotives provided the power. If a large log or a number of smaller logs needed transport they were supported on two trolleys to spread the load and allow it to negotiate curves in the track. A major problem with a tramway was keeping trolleys under control when descending slopes particularly on horse drawn systems which usually had a man on each end hauling a rope to apply the brake. If a locomotive was used it had its own brake. As tramways developed they became more sophisticated, steel rails became the norm, better bridges were built and more efficient sources of power such as steam winches and locomotives were used. Many tramways as a result were extended far from the mill. To load logs onto the tramway trolley a ramp would be erected close to the track and logs brought to the site by horses and bullocks. These were pulled up the ramp using a method called parbuckling. Here ropes attached to the trolley were passed around the log, when the free end of the rope was hauled

the logs would roll up the ramp onto the trolley.



With a firm grip on the brake ropes the brakemen hold their loads steady for the photographer somewhere below "The Take-off" on the Mississippi tramway.

One of the most extensive timber tramways systems in Gippsland was at Walhalla, where the mines had an enormous appetite for timber as fuel for the boilers and for construction purposes. The scale of this operation was impressive and beyond the scope of this article. Many books have been written on this subject including "Firewood Tramways of the Walhalla Mines" by Terry and Brenda Jenkins P O Box Yarra Junction 59673667.

Another method of hauling logs to the mill was a high lead system which used an arrangement of winches, cables, pulleys and poles, to haul or carry logs often clear of the ground. In some areas of Australia this method is becoming popular again for environmental reason. A good example of a high lead system can be found at Mt Nugong near Swifts Creek. Called the "Washington winch" it consists of a twin cylinder steam engine which drove three winches. The main cable was 1800 metres long (over a mile) and as thick as a mans thumb. Two trees on the other side of the road still carry some of the pulleys used to operate the system up to 1960. Two wheel drive access to this site is possible. Follow the Omeo Highway from Swifts Creek turn right into the Bindi Rd and right into the Nunningong and proceed for approximately 15kms

Sawn and processed timber was transported from the mill to the processing area on horse or bullock drawn vehicles such as sledges, drays and wagons. On an early primitive road a four wheeled wagon hauled by a bullock team was the most suitable method. Although this was slow it would cope with rough terrain, mud etc and did not require feed to be carried as for horses



Clemann's bullock team at Meeniyan sawmill, 1906.

After the 1950's the vast improvement in road construction led to development of dedicated logging roads allowing trucks to carry logs to the saw mills and sawn timber to market. This change revolutionized the whole industry. Mills were constructed in towns, houses were constructed for the worker's families, their social situation was improved, children attended school and medical and hospital services were available. Many towns in Gippsland such as Orbost, Nowa Nowa, Heyfield, Noojee and Powelltown were timber communities and the timber industry was their main source of employment.

Eventually the old saw mills in the forest with their tramways like those at Mt Worth were abandoned. The use of trucks sped up the transport process. In the early days of motor transport trucks descended mountains in a cloud of steam from the water used to cool the brakes. Ordinary tray trucks in rigid or trailer form were used to transport sawn timber from the mill and sometimes to the final destination. Timber products also went to railway stations for delivery by train. Railways were constructed to some timber towns and some mills were built next to the rail line.

In recent years a number of factors including concerns for the environment and economics has led to the reduction of the timber industry, Dedicated timber towns are declining and the large scale transport of timber is becoming a thing of the past.

Leongatha and District Historical Society
Program 2007

The Society holds a monthly meeting on the 3rd Tuesday of each month in the Mechanics Institute rooms. **All welcome.**

The rooms are open to the public on Thursday and Friday of each week from 12 noon until 4pm – or by appointment. Research facilities are available at these times

January	No monthly meeting
Friday 26 th	Australia Day Cemetery Walk
February	
Saturday 24 th	Fieldtrip : “Leongatha’s 20 most significant historic buildings”
Tuesday 20 th	Monthly meeting
March	
Tuesday 20 th	Guest speaker : “Fire Brigade History” Opening of exhibition : Fire brigade history
April	
Tuesday 17 th	Monthly meeting
May	
Tuesday 15 th	Guest speaker : Alan Riseley. “Riseley Family History”
June	
Tuesday 19 th	Monthly meeting
July	
Tuesday 17 th	Guest speaker : John Hall. “Bowling Club History”
August	
Tuesday 21 st	AGM : Dinner – Historic film
September	
Tuesday 18 th	Guest speaker : Ian Starkey. “Local Native Plants” Opening of exhibition: “Buildings, Houses, and Gardens”
October	
Tuesday 23 rd	Monthly meeting Historic story competition presentation (date to be decided)
November	
Tuesday 20 th	Guest speaker :
December	Christmas break-up – location to be confirmed

Two exhibitions annually :
 Exhibition 1 : March to August
 Exhibition 2 : September to February

Story Competition. In 2007 we will be running an historic competition for primary and secondary school students. Local schools will receive information later this month