



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Preserving Our Heritage

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Latest News

Shingler Memorial Dinner and Lecture Team.

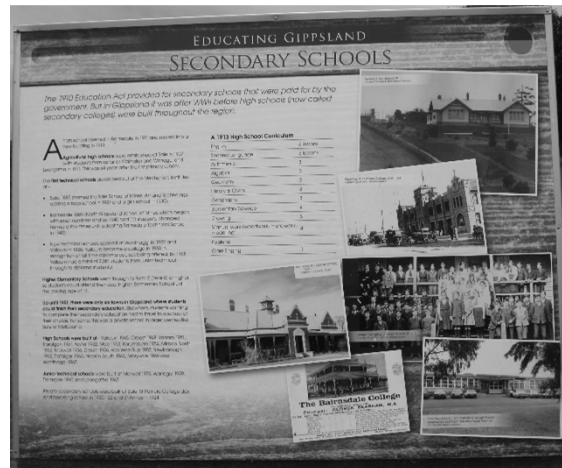
The Shingler Memorial dinner was a wonderful evening, with over 100 in attendance. A huge thanks is due to the team who organised such a successful and lovely evening. Robert Sage, Robin Williams, Margaret Stokes, Wal Cayzer, Pat and Jim Spinks, Ian Lester, Ruth Caughey and Geoff Michael all deserve a massive thanks for their contributions in the lead up to the event and for helping to set out the tables, chairs and flowers on the day.

The opening of the Gippsland Heritage Walk

On Sunday November 8th the Gippsland Heritage Walk was unveiled in the Immigration Park in Morwell. The walk runs around the lake at the park and there are a series of panels set out along the path. Each panel tells the story of some aspect of Gippsland History. The walk through Gippsland history is told in themes with several panels telling the history of the Gunaikurnai nation, the traditional people of most of Gippsland. Other subjects included are selectors, education, and mining. Our Society provided many photographs shown on the panels.

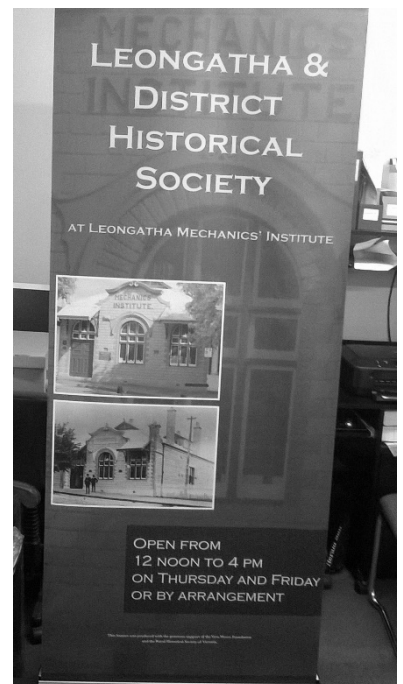


The panels look wonderful and the history included has been well researched. Congratulations must go to Graham Goulding for his painstaking research and excellent presentation. The heritage walk is well worth a visit.



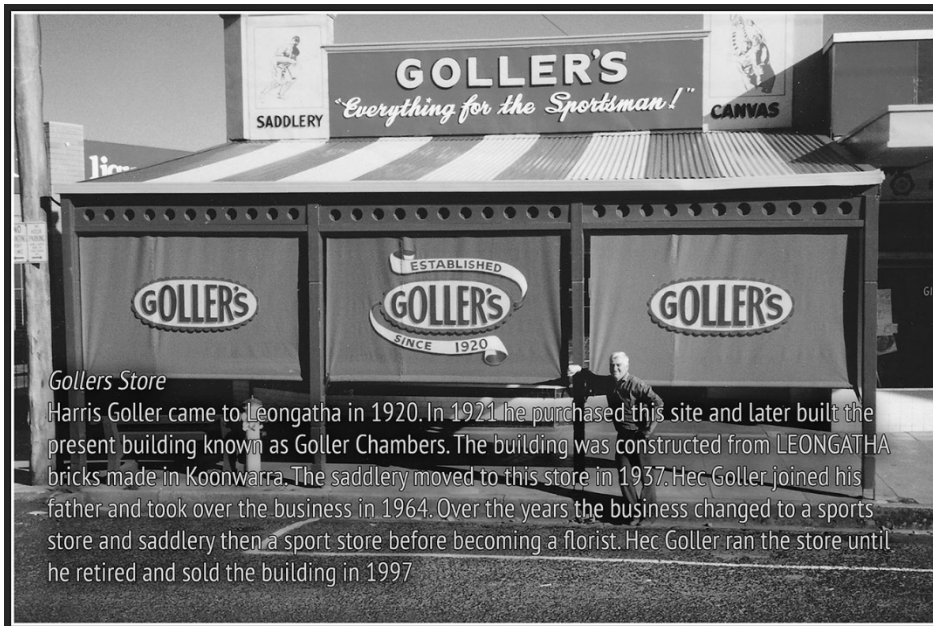
Our new banner.

Last year we applied to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria for a grant to pay for a banner. This year the grant was approved and the banner was designed featuring pictures of the Mechanics Institute. We have already been able to use the banner at the Shingler dinner and we look forward to using it again at other events in the future.



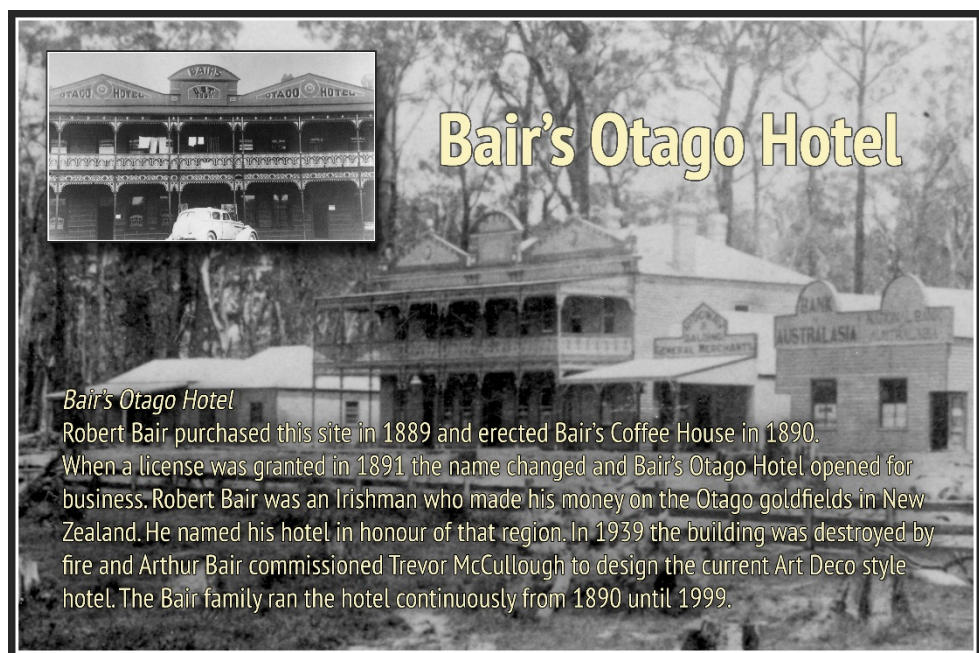
The Plaque Project.

There are a number of plaques currently being finalised that will be placed around town in the near future. The project is proceeding slowly. Two plaques are almost complete. The Bair's Hotel plaque is a prototype and only requires one date to be corrected. The Goller's Store plaque only needs the owner to approve. The other plaques will be Mrs. Maher's Coffee Palace (Stewarts) on the corner of Long and Jeffrey Streets, Edney's garage, McCartin's Hotel, Hayes' Store and the Bills Trough.



Gollers Store

Harris Goller came to Leongatha in 1920. In 1921 he purchased this site and later built the present building known as Goller Chambers. The building was constructed from LEONGATHA bricks made in Koonwarra. The saddlery moved to this store in 1937. Hec Goller joined his father and took over the business in 1964. Over the years the business changed to a sports store and saddlery then a sport store before becoming a florist. Hec Goller ran the store until he retired and sold the building in 1997.



Bair's Otago Hotel

Bair's Otago Hotel

Robert Bair purchased this site in 1889 and erected Bair's Coffee House in 1890. When a license was granted in 1891 the name changed and Bair's Otago Hotel opened for business. Robert Bair was an Irishman who made his money on the Otago goldfields in New Zealand. He named his hotel in honour of that region. In 1939 the building was destroyed by fire and Arthur Bair commissioned Trevor McCullough to design the current Art Deco style hotel. The Bair family ran the hotel continuously from 1890 until 1999.

Shingler Memorial Dinner and Lecture.



This year at the Shingler dinner and lecture Dr Michael Bourke gave an insightful speech about the Doctors and services provided in Leongatha over the last 50 years. He also touched on some of the earlier Doctors that were so important to the community, beginning with our first Doctor in Leongatha; Dr Carr

Dr Michael Carr arrived on the train from Melbourne in 1891 and set up practice in rooms at McCartins Hotel. He was incredibly important to the community as before Dr Carrs arrival patients would have to wait for a horse to travel either to Drouin or Morwell to bring a Doctor back to attend.

Dr Carr was here for nearly 20 years and we can still see a reminder of his presence with the naming of Carr Street.

The next Doctor to make a difference to our town was Dr Francis Adersley Wood who not only brought his practice to Leongatha but also started up Stradbroke Private Hospital on Church Street.

With the dedicated assistance of Sister Potter, the Stradbroke Hospital delivered over 3000 babies and dealt with minor surgeries.

When Dr Wood died in 1941 Dr George Bennet continued with the practice in Long Street and the Stradbroke Hospital.



Sister Janet Potter

Dr Horace Pern was also a Doctor who had a lasting effect on Leongatha. He established the Woorayl Hospital which was on the corner of Smith and Gray Streets. From there Dr Pern began the St Marys Hospital in McCartin Street. It was an alternative to Stradbroke and was run in exemplary fashion. Dr Pern passed away after a short illness in 1936 and Dr Francis Patrick Donoghue came to take over his practice.



Dr Horace Pern
Photo: Leongatha Historical Society

Dr Donoghue was considered a very capable man being trained surgically as well as medically. This was very helpful to the area as there were fewer surgeries that had to be referred away to a larger hospital.

1941 St Marys had to close as Dr Donoghue was called away to be a Medical Officer during the war. This caused some concern with local residents because of the lack of medical and hospital services and they formed a committee alongside the Bush Nursing Association. The hospital was then reopened in 1942 as the Bush Nursing Hospital.

After WW2 Dr Donoghue returned and continued with his practice and the Bush Nursing Hospital.

Dr Bennett retired in 1955 and his son Alex Bennett then took over the practice and the work at Stradbroke.

In 1958 the Woorayl District Memorial Hospital opened. This provided additional services like pathology, radiology and other specialised services. It meant the end for the private hospitals; Stradbroke and St Marys otherwise known as The Bush Nursing Hospital.

The hospital on McCartin Street remained vacant until the Leongatha Rotary Club decided to provide a home for the elderly. In 1960 the

Woorayl Lodge opened.

Both Dr Donoghue and Dr Alec Bennett were at this stage needing extra help and advertised for assistance.

This was the time when Doctors like Dr Ron Eaggar, Dr Mario Croatto and Dr Michael Bourke came to our town.

We then heard about how the growth of the town over the years meant a need for more Doctors. By the 90's there were many other Doctors that were a part of the Leongatha Medical Group. We also had our own physio, radiographer and pathologist.

Dr Bourke also pointed out the importance of the Ambulance in the area. When they first began the Doctor was required to get inside the Ambulance with the driver and patient as they didn't have the facilities or trained paramedics like they do today.

We are very grateful to Dr Michael Bourke for coming to talk to us at the Shingler dinner. He shared a great deal of information, stories from his own experience and made us laugh.

Sport, always part of our community by Lyn Skillern

Sport has always been part of the Australian society and over time it has become an obsession. During the pioneer days of South Gippsland sport was something that enabled people to come together and socialize. The first sporting clubs were rifle clubs. These did not require much in the way of infrastructure as the pioneers general had access to a firearm and set up targets in open areas. Tennis courts were also established in the early days especially in connection with churches and halls. Competitions between small communities developed. Early surveyors such as John Lardner always surveyed a recreation reserve in each township. These were then set up as cricket and football grounds and show grounds. George Roughead was instrumental in the founding of the Leongatha Recreation Reserve in 1892. This reserve was bush and had to be cleared before any sporting grounds could be established. A small oval for football and cricket was set up in in these early years. It is significant that 3 generations of Rougheads have played football on that oval at the recreation reserve.



Football Team 1890's

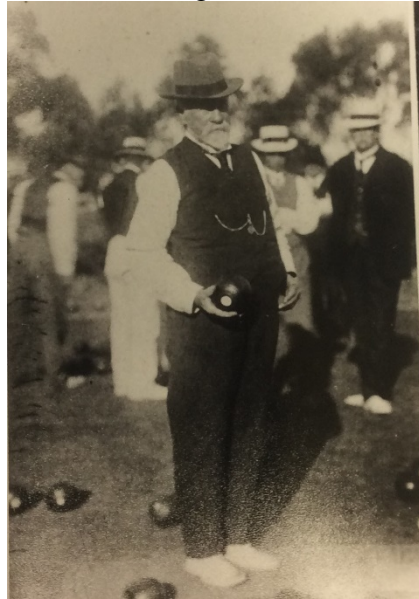
Star Hawthorn
footballer Jarryd
Roughead (son of
Michael and Sheril)
is a fifth generation
Leongatha
Roughead. George
Roughead after
whom Roughead
Street and
Roughead Road
were named was
Jarryd's great great

Grandfather. He ran a General Store in the town from the 1890's in the areas pioneering days. This store was situated near the railway line on the main road running between Inverloch in the south and Morwell in the north. The town section of this road was to become Roughead Street. When Gippsland was opening up in the 1870's George and his father came to the region via Port Albert by steamer and worked on the railway between Sale and Rosedale. George came to Leongatha in the late 1880's and started the store. In 1908 the family moved to a farm just south of Leongatha, hence the naming of Roughead Road.

There were many more football teams in the past than the present day. Communities such Mt Eccles and Nerrena, had their own teams. As time moved on some teams disappeared and other amalgamated. The Meeniyen and Dumbalk team became MDU. Cricket was also popular and most communities had their own team.

Sport was mostly for men and boys. Tennis was one of the few early sports where women competed in the early days. Female sport has developed over time but we have yet to have a female Aussie Rules team.

Bowling greens were another facility set up in many communities. In Leongatha John Lardner surveyed a green in the area next to the railway line where the former railway houses are sited near the bus stop. Lardner loved bowls and enjoyed playing until he was quite old. The original club building is now the skin store at Coal Creek Park.



John Lardner

School children enjoyed sports days where they had running, skipping, egg and spoon and three legged races as well as other events.

Athletics days were held at Leongatha High from 1912. The students went to Dandenong once a year by train to compete against Warragul, Sale, Bairnsdale and Dandenong High Schools. In the 1930s a local secondary schools sports association was established and the annual athletics sports were a highlight of the year for many.

Mrs. Annie Mesley was the wife of Leongatha High School founder and Principal Arthur Mesley. She was a keen croquet player and set up a croquet lawn in the front garden of Leongatha High in early 1913. Later she founded the Leongatha Croquet Club located at the Recreation Reserve.



COUNTRY WEEK 1957.
Noreen Moloney, Val Fox, Rhonda Pearce, Marion McGannon,
Betty Dowd, Cynthia Hook, Val Hams.

The Leongatha and District Netball Association have just celebrated their 50th anniversary. They played on courts at Leongatha High before moving to the courts at the Recreation Reserve.

Basketball started in Mesley Hall in the 60s before moving to the stadium that is now the cinema. Volleyball also started in Mesley Hall with a special rule for when the ball hit the ceiling.

The Leongatha Hockey Club was founded in the 50s and they played in the South Gippsland Hockey Association. Games were played on fields located in the Rec where the velodrome now sits. The club had to move to Leongatha High when the velodrome was established. This club eventually folded in 2002.

Cycling was a popular sport from early times. Road racing was popular in the 1930s and by the 70s there was enough interest to establish a velodrome. An exciting cycling carnival was held annually for many years and was extremely popular. This event even concluded with fireworks.



Coming Events

Christmas Lunch

This year our annual Christmas lunch will be held at the home of Pat and Jim Spinks on the Saturday 28th November 2015. Arrive around noon.

“Hollyside” 315 Canavans Road, Mt Eccles South.

Please BYO drinks and a salad or dessert to share with everyone. The famous punch will be supplied.

RSVP to Pat 5668 6365 by the 25th.

Australia Day

On Tuesday the 26th of January 2016 there will be a visit to the Avenue of Honour Commemoration Facility at 11.30. Come meet at the Recreation Reserve near the Pioneer Gates. This will be followed by afternoon tea and display at the Historical rooms.

Reminder

To all members – 2025/16 subscriptions are due. Could you please ensure they are paid soon.