

Leongatha and District Historical Society

P O Box 431 Leongatha 3953



Newsletter

Volume 3 Number 3 August 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

Fifty Years Ago. Lola Bailey, Pat Spinks and Johanna Haasjes have been very busy setting up an exhibition on the 1950's. This exhibition has been organised to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the Daffodil Festival. Come along and remember the 1950's by looking at clothing, books, household items, photographs and other memorabilia. If you are too young to remember the 50's come along and see what it was like. One of the highlights is a DVD of the 1956 Olympics which will be running on the society's new television set. The society obtained a grant from the Victoria Multicultural Commission which enabled us to buy a television set, DVD player and video player.

The Daffodil Festival

The festival will be held on September 7th, 8th and 9th. Our exhibition will be open from 10 am to 4pm on Thursday and Friday and from 9 to 4 pm on Saturday. Any assistance you could give the society during the festival will be most welcome.

The Annual Meeting

The Annual General meeting was held on August 15th. Thank you to those who attended. The office bearers are :-

President Geoff Michael

Vice Presidents Lola Bailey and Ian Lester

Secretary Lyn Skillern

Assistant Secretary Johanna Haasjes

Treasurer Audrey Hall

Archivists Pat Spinks, Lorna Dowel and Margaret Kindellan

Geoff Michael gave an excellent report on the past year and thanked our members for their work

*Any members who can help with cataloguing or general sorting etc of the collection will be most welcome on a Thursday or Friday afternoon.

The People Behind the Street Names by Lola Bailey

Bellingham Street

Most of the early streets in Leongatha were named after prominent families of the time. Phillip Bellingham was the second of four brothers and after working on two Gippsland railway lines he selected land at Ruby. Here he became a successful farmer. His brothers followed him to the area where they also were successful farmers. Phillip started a butcher shop, first on the farm selling to local people and later he opened a shop in Leongatha. When his children were ready to start school a house "Adelong" was built on the corner of Jeffrey and Brumley Streets where it still stands today. The house has been recently renovated and is currently used by the Medical Group as one of its buildings. The new house was built one block away from the home of his wife's sister, Mrs John Jeffrey, the wife of the Leongatha State School Headmaster. The name "Adelong" was probably chosen because Adelong N.S.W. was Mrs Bellingham's home town. The name Bellingham is still prominent in the district with some descendants now living in Leongatha. Jeffrey was named after that headmaster John Jeffrey.



"Adelong" with the Bellingham family.

Young Street

William Wilson Young was the first publisher of the "Great Southern Star". He was born in Scotland in 1851 and, with his sister, was brought out to Australia by his mother when he was about 4 years old. His mother had come to join her married sister. William did not remember seeing his father who had gone to America, after falling on hard times and had died there. William's early life was spent at McIvor. At 14 he started work at the "McIvor Times". He worked on several newspapers in Central Victoria and married in 1874 at the age of 24. After

some years and some family troubles he was advised by the secretary of the Typographical Society to buy the "Mirboo Herald". This he did with Mr R Ingram as partner and this brought him to Gippsland.

When the railway to Leongatha was being constructed William Young, with others from Mirboo North, inspected the Leongatha area with a view of selecting sites for residences and business houses. He thought that Leongatha was a suitable place to establish a newspaper and decided to make a start as soon as possible. There was a printer there but he left when he heard Mr Young had secured premises and was not seen again. And so the "Great Southern Star" commenced and continued successfully under Mr Young's leadership until it was sold to Mr Rossiter some 16 years later.



William Wilson Young

Our feature article this time is on saw mills. For those who have not been to visit Mount Worth Park, I recommend it. The forest walk gives us a good idea of what the environment was like when our pioneers came to the area. There are also remains of saw mills including mounds of saw dust and evidence of where a tramway once ran. Another recommendation is

the book "Jackson's Track" by Daryl Tonkin and Carolyn Landon. This is not only the wonderful story of Daryl Tonkin but also the story of timber milling in the West Gippsland area. A second book by Carolyn Landon which tells more about Jackson's Track has been recently launched.

Feature Article :- Saw Mills *by Ian Lester*

In the earliest years of European settlement in South Gippsland transport was a problem and until roads were improved in the early 1900's the pack horse was the primary means of transport. This limited the movement of heavy equipment and meant that saw mills were very rare. Most timber for building purposes was cut with a pit saw or split if suitable timber was available. Timber for heavy construction would be shaped using hand tools such as axes and adzes. (Articles by Ian in earlier newsletters explain the use of these hand tools).

Many people from northern Europe did not understand Australian timbers and would not use them because they tended to warp and crack as they dried out. This situation encouraged the importation of overseas timber. Thus ships leaving Australia with wool and wheat would return with northern hemisphere timber. This would be sawn before loading it on the ships to make it easier to handle. This situation reduced the need for a local timber industry. The two main factors which lead to an increase in the milling of local timber were firstly the improvement in roads and secondly the improvement in knowledge of local timber. Better roads enabled drays and wagons to carry heavy loads more effectively and better knowledge and techniques for processing local timber made it more popular. New techniques reduced warping and cracking and local timber was stronger and more durable. For structures exposed to the weather like bridges local timber was far superior to the imported product. Early saw mills were usually powered by a steam engine which would use mill waste "mill ends" as fuel or a water wheel. In later years internal combustion engines using diesel or petrol and electric motors were available.

Saw mills had a number of components.



A breaking down saw

1. **The breaking down saw(s).** These were used to cut the log into flitches which could be man handled. The saw could have one or two blades depending on the size of the mill and the logs it handled. A single blade needed to be big enough in diameter to reach the top of the log. For logs that were bigger in diameter two blades were used one above the other. These had to be very accurately aligned to produce a single cut (kerf).

1. **The sizing saw.** This cut the timber to the required size.

2. **A waste disposal system.** Used to get rid of saw dust and unusable timber (mill ends)

Many mills had additional equipment which could value add rough sawn timber. Such things as drying kilns to season timber and shaping /sizing machines which gave accurate dimensions and a good finish to the final product.

The Process

1. A suitable log is chosen and cut to length. This would depend on the required length of the finished product and the capacity of the mill. With the bark removed the log is placed on a breaking trolley. In early mills this was a manual task using levers, cants, hooks and chocks. Later powered winches were used.
2. With the log on the trolley it was positioned to gain the best results with the minimum waste. This required good knowledge and judgement. The log is then secured to the trolley to prevent movement using steel stays positioned to allow the saw to cut the log without interference.
3. The log and trolley are then drawn towards the breaking down saw using a reversible winch driven from the main power source. The operator has total control of the winch and can stop or reverse the log/ trolley at any time. As the saw cuts into the log a short chain is attached to the main log and the flitch to pull the flitch into position as the cut is completed.

4. With the flitch removed it is placed on a ramp so that it can be moved to the sizing saw for processing. The log is then turned 90 degrees on the breaking trolley on to its flat side with the log secure the process is repeated until the log is reduced to manageable pieces. Good judgement (keeping the final product in mind) is most important at this stage.
5. The sizing saw is mounted on an elevated platform (bench) with a trolley with rails on either side. As the flitch is moved down the ramp onto the trolley and bench an adjustable gauge is set to control the size of the end product. The flitch was manually pushed past the saw onto the out trolley. The "tailer" in charge of the out trolley would decide whether an additional cut was required and pass it back to the in operator or place it on the waste heap for further processing.
6. With the final product prepared for delivery or storage the need to deal with the waste began. Waste was saw dust and unusable timber such as sap wood, cracked or badly knotted timber. Saw dust was regularly cleaned away from around the sawing areas as it built up. In the early days this was done manually using rakes, shovels and wheelbarrows. If not burnt or used for something else it was put in a large heap. On many old mill sites such as at Mount Worth these heaps can still be seen many years after the mill ceased to operate. Later saw dust extractor systems were developed which used air blowers to move the dust. The unusable timber was cut up and used for fuel in the mill or for domestic fires.



A Tramway in the forest

A major task in a saw mill was the maintenance of saws and other equipment. A “saw doctor” was responsible for the gulleting and sharpening of the saws and correcting other saws faults. In early mills most bearings were plain types and lubrication was an ongoing task. A steam powered mill would require a qualified steam engine operator who was responsible for reducing the dangers associated boilers and steam while keeping the engines in operation.

Most mills had a yard boy who was responsible for stacking the sawn timber. In most cases the timber is cut green with a high moisture content. The sawn timber must be carefully stacked in order to prevent it from warping as it dries out. A saw mill must have an efficient system to bring the logs from the felling site to the mill. Many methods were used.

1. Horses and bullocks often working in teams dragged logs. This was however very dangerous if the log rolled and jinkers or wagons were often used to prevent logs rolling.
2. Tramways where popular were logs were on trolleys on wooden or steel rails. Horse, winches or small locomotives were used as a power source.
3. High lead systems which used cables hauled by winches were used to move logs
4. By about 1950 mechanised diesel powered equipment has dominated log handling and logs are transported using trucks hauling specialized log trailers

Coming Events

Guest Speaker

Rodney Emerson will be the guest speaker at the meeting on September 19th. His subject will be the history of the Leongatha Daffodil Festival.

Please come along at 8 pm at the Mechanics’ Institute Leongatha

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Thank you