



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Newsletter Volume 7 Number 1 February 2010

Preserving Our Heritage

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Email: leongathahistsoc@yahoo.com.au

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The latest news

•The Mechanics' Institute

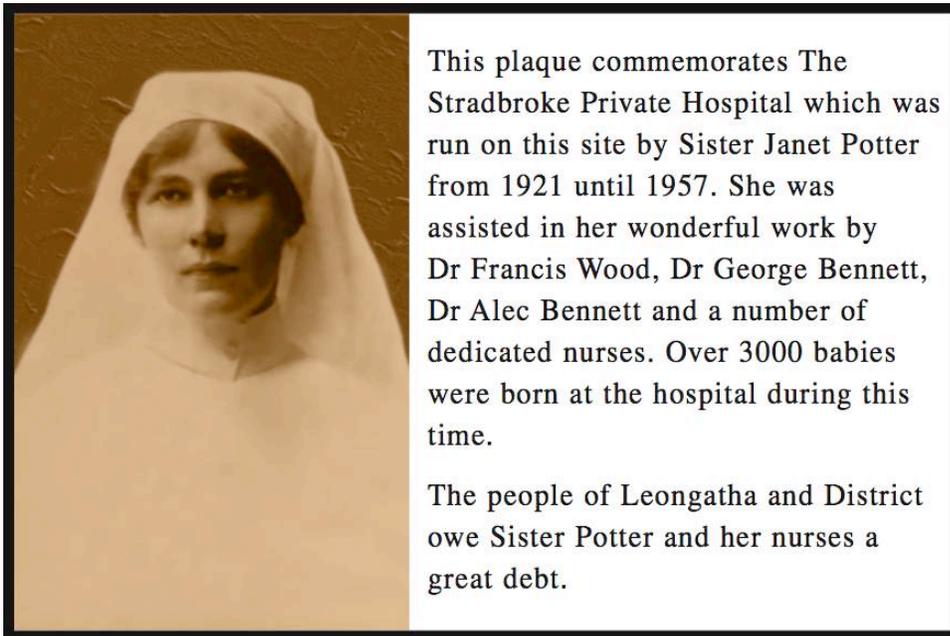
The restored Mechanics' Institute was officially opened by the Mayor, Jim Fawcett., on Australia Day. The exhibition "Weddings are Timeless" was also unveiled. Seventy people came along and enjoyed the display and our excellent afternoon tea. Thank you to Pat Spinks, Johanna Haasjes, Jennifer Hamilton and Joan Michael for arranging the exhibition and making the rooms look so good. Thank you also to Mavis Wightman who made a beautiful heritage bridal bouquet for the opening. This looked wonderful, as did the whole exhibition.



Part of the Exhibition

Sister Potter

Below is a draft of the memorial to Sister Janet Potter that will eventually go on the wall at the entrance to the IGA supermarket. The plaque will be in bronze and look something like the presentation below. The picture of Sister Potter will be etched in bronze. A fund raising committee will soon be set up to obtain the money for the plaque. We are still recording the names of babies born at the Stradbroke Hospital. If you have not registered please do so.



10 75%

Situations Vacant! Help Wanted!

Would you enjoy working with a group of Society members who are having fun indulging in their shared interest, the preservation of our local history? Do you have a spare half a day per week or month to assist at the Historical Society? Do you think you would enjoy being part of a team?

We have vacancies in the **Reception Team**, the **Cataloguing Team** and are hopeful of forming an **Acquisitions Team**.

The **Reception Team** is on duty from 12 noon until 4 pm on Thursday and Friday. The main duties involve opening up, putting the sign out and generally welcoming visitors (be they paying guests, buying a jar of jam or a book, visiting members or making research enquiries). We have a Donation Box for the paying guests, a jar for the jam money, a tin for the book money and a book for research enquiries. Researchers are able to write the enquiry details and contact details in a book if the enquiry cannot be answered that. All these procedures are listed in a folder designed for that purpose. There are always at least two people on duty and one at least has experience, and hopefully, a key.

The main qualification is an enjoyment in meeting people. Knowledge of the collection is not a prerequisite as we pride ourselves on providing the necessary information.

The Cataloguing Team requires no special skills but an attention to detail is helpful. Computer skills are useful but not necessary. Someone else can do the computer entry on another day.

Cataloguing involves three distinct aspects:

Filling in the worksheet ready to enter on the computer. This is the most involved and may need careful examination of the object, numbering by whichever method is suitable for that object, checking with subject or other lists, measuring size etc. It is all very structured and is not usually completed in isolation.

Taking a photograph of the object and loading to computer.

Entering the worksheet on to the computer and filing the worksheet in the appropriate folder.

Cataloguing is usually done in batches and it is normal for different people to be involved with the three different aspects of cataloguing. This works well if each task is completed to a specific stage and,

as mentioned above, attention to detail is helpful.

When is the cataloguing done? It is not very convenient to start a cataloguing project on Thursday and Friday afternoons because of the interruptions, so that leaves Monday Tuesday or Wednesday with the option of morning or afternoon. This is your choice and arrangements can be made to suit.

The Acquisitions Team has been spoken about for some years but has never actually been formed. When the Society first moved into the Mechanics' Institute we had room to store almost everything we were offered (with the exception of the pea rake). As time has passed, lack of storage space has meant we have to look more carefully at what we are collecting now. Those items collected in the past may need to be reconsidered.

We have a **Collection Policy** and the main task of the **Acquisition Team** will be to implement that policy. First priority will be recently donated items, then un-catalogued items already in the collection and lastly catalogued items. This does not mean throwing out items that do not fit the collection policy guidelines. Consideration would have to be given to returning them to the donor, passing them on to another Historical Society or Museum, selling to a collector, finding a good home or maybe as a last resort, taking it to the tip.

As the provenance of the item is one of the first things to use in determining the status of that item there is often a bit of detective work involved. Looking through receipt books, checking with senior members, examination of documentation, and possibly use of reference books or even the Internet. Where and when to meet? This will have to be decided when the team is formed.

Anyone interested in any of these teams please contact the Society. We need your help!



Leongatha High after the fire 1933

Leongatha Secondary College Centenary

The date has been set for the Leongatha High School/Technical School/ Secondary College Centenary. This will be April 28th and 29th in 2012. The celebration of 100 years of secondary education in Leongatha will be a big event and many of our members attended or taught at these schools. Lyn Skillern is editor and main writer of the centenary book and is keen to hear from ex students and teachers who have memorabilia or who want to share their memories of their school days. Jack Edney has lent Lyn some wonderful items and I am sure there are more out there. Lyn is particularly keen to collect the names of students from 1912 to 1933. Records were lost when the school burnt down in 1933. Please contact Lyn on 56686304 or visit the Mechanics' Institute on a Thursday or Friday when we are open.

Lark Force by Lyn Skillern

In January I was contacted by representative of the group preserving the story of Lark Force and the men of the 2/22 Battalion. This force was overrun by the Japanese at Rabaul in January 1942. I wrote a

piece for their website for the anniversary of the fall of Rabaul. In the article I wrote about the 17 local men who went to Rabaul. Of these, 13 never came home. Six were on the *Montevideo Maru* when it was sunk on July 1st 1942 and six were massacred at Gasmata on March 8th 1942. Major Bill Owen escaped but was later killed in New Guinea. Three men Phil Hillis, Dave Lawson and Owen Hughes all returned home after escaping from Rabaul. A Pte C Simpson was in the 2/22nd but was invalided home in September 1941 due to malaria. Pte Simpson gave his address as Private Bag 14 Leongatha. The families of the men on the *Montevideo Maru* discovered their fate in late 1945, the others were just missing in action. I will in due course write a memorial for each man for the website. I need more information on those who died, Jack Howard, Frank James, Harry Millsom, James Butterworth, Bert Kuhne, Fred Ketels, Tommy Sangster, Fred Broadbent, Bill and Tom Bellingham, Jimmy Kavanagh and Arthur Oliver, as well as those who survived. The article I wrote will be in the next newsletter and I hope to have new information and photographs.



Frank James 1918-1942. massacred at Gasmata

This photo was taken in 1935

Feature Article

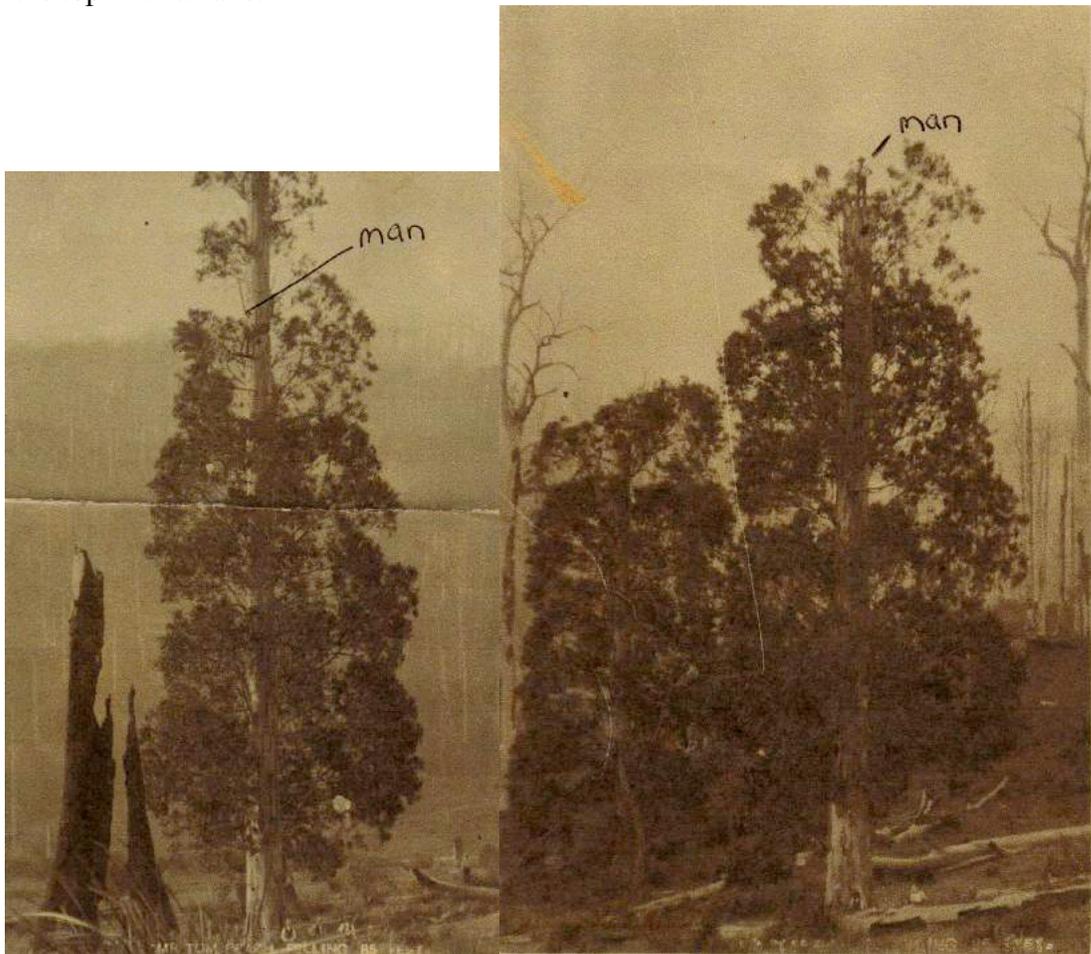
Tree felling by Ian Lester

When the first European settlers came into South and West Gippsland they faced an enormous challenge, that of clearing the dense forest. This task had to be done if they were to turn the forest into productive farmland. There was no heavy machinery to help them, they had to rely on axes and saws. Many were not experienced bushmen. They had been miners, teachers, policemen and even seamen. Many tried novel and impractical methods of felling trees. Over time their skills improved and the tree felling practises evolved safer and better methods developed.

The process of tree felling

1. Inspect the tree and the site to determine the direction of fall and any aspects that may affect the safety of the fellers. Factors to consider were wind direction and strength, any lean of the trunk, branch and foliage distribution, and any other obstacles which might impact of the felling.
2. Decide at what height above the ground the tree should be cut. This involved checking the diameter of the tree at ground level and above the top of the buttress. Most trees were cut above the buttress, three metres or more above the ground. An elevated platform or spring boards were used for the fellers to stand on.
3. The first step in felling was to cut a V shape or scarf into the tree at an angle of 30 to 45 degrees and to a depth of 1/3rd of the trees diameter. When the tree finally falls the scarf allows

it to happen. The cut can be made with a felling axe or the bottom cut with a cross cut saw and the top with an axe.



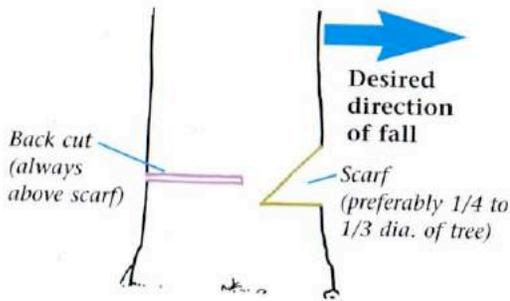
Tom Peach felling the top of a tree. He is labelled as the man in this before and after shot

4. The next step was to do the back or felling cut 2 to 3 inches (about 50 to 70 mm) above the bottom of the scarf. The back cut can be done with an axe alone but usually with a cross cut saw. The base of the cross cut and the base of the scarf need to be parallel with 2 to 3 inches of wood left uncut. This uncut timber formed a “hinge” which controlled the direction of the fall and broke as the tree reached the ground. As the saw cuts into the tree trunk wedges can be driven into the cut (kerf) to prevent the saw jamming and into the tree if it is reluctant to fall. Great care needed to be taken at all stages of tree felling. As the tree started to fall a pre planned escape route, rearwards about 45 degrees to the direction of the fall was taken. The position directly behind the tree was dangerous as the tree trunk could slide back over the stump. If the precautions taken in step 1 were acted upon, the chances of injury or death were reduced, but the term widow maker was often used in relation to tree felling.

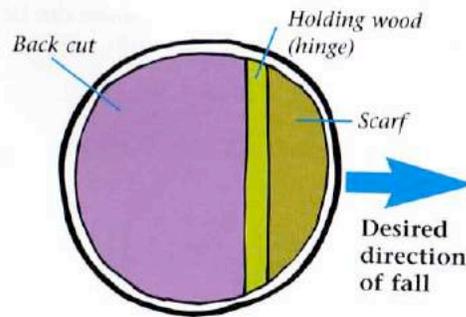
Illustrations of tree felling techniques follow on the next page

Standard Scarf

- Most commonly used.
- Consists of horizontal and angled open cuts.



- Both cuts are to finish at the same depth in the tree.
- Scarf wood should be able to be removed cleanly.



Use the Society's Library

Books catalogued n 2009-2010

929.2 McK John McKean and his family in Australia

923.5 SMI Prisoners of war on the *Montevideo Maru*

929.2 CHA From Broxburn to Ballarat and beyond (Chalmers)

994.56 KON Valley of Peace, the history of Kongwak

923.5 MAS Beersheba, Men of the 4th Light Horse

996.SMI Out of the Rough, the history of the Leongatha Golf Club

994.56 INV One Hundred Years of Education in Inverloch

\$ copies of the Victorian Historical Journal

Themes for 2010•

• **Weddings.** An exhibition of wedding gowns and other wedding memorabilia is now set up

• **The history of schools**

This subject is popular with many. With the centenary of secondary education in Leongatha being only two years away, the history of schools will be important for some time. The Society plans to ask the schools in the area to prepare timelines on their school's history for display at the Mechanics' Institute. Our October bus tour will take in some school sites and we will hear stories from former students of these schools

There are many schools no longer in existence but the story of each can be reconstructed. The careful research of records and the collecting of stories from ex students will enable us to prepare displays on schools such as Mardan South, Wooreen, Hallston, Mt Eccles, Mt Eccles South, Leongatha East, North and South, Dumbalk, Koorooman East, Milford, Dollar, Koonwarra, Middle Tarwin, Fairbank and many more. Photographic time lines look great, we just need to organise them. Please help where you can.

Do you have excess produce, especially fruit?

The Society raises money for our work by selling jam and other preserves. We have four cooks who make jam and other products at the moment. Can you help us either by providing fruit and tomatoes or by making jam or pickles. If you can help please let us know. There are special rules regarding the jam jars and labels but these are easily managed.

Excursions coming up

A trip to Bob Newton's property to see his collection of historic memorabilia will be held on Sunday March 21st. A second excursion to Tullaree, for our members only, will be on Saturday May 22nd. Please contact the Society if you wish to attend. Transport arrangements will be made based on numbers.

•*Program for 2010*

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Leongatha and District Historical Society

Program 2010

The Society holds a monthly meeting on the 2nd Wednesday of each month in the Mechanics Institute rooms. **All welcome.**

The rooms are open to the public for viewing the exhibitions and research on Thursday and Friday of each week from 12 noon until 4pm – or by appointment.

February

Wednesday Feb 10th General Meeting

March

Wednesday March 10th General Meeting guest speaker Jim Stokes

Sunday March 21st Trip to Bob Newton's collection at Korumburra South

April

Wednesday April 14th Committee Meeting

Wednesday April 21st In honour of Anzac Day the meeting will be held at the RSL Leongatha. Dinner will be followed by a talk on local service men and women.

May

Wednesday 12th General Meeting

Saturday 22nd The visit to "Tullaree" by society members

June

Wednesday 9th General Meeting guest speaker

July

Wednesday 14th General Meeting

Saturday July 17th Shingler Memorial Dinner with Speaker Cheryl Glowrey

August

Wednesday 11th Annual/General Meeting featuring historic films

Daffodil Festival featuring an "Antique Road Show" and a display of heirloom items

September

Wednesday 8th General Meeting Guest Speaker

October

Wednesday 13th General Meeting

A bus tour to school sites, date to be arranged

History Week late October. The theme will be the history of local schools. Each school will be asked to make a time line of their school's history. Former students/teachers will be invited to prepare a timeline for schools that have closed

November

Wednesday 10th General Meeting guest speaker

End of year celebration the last weekend in November

• **Prepare roster for summer holidays**

Dates and details to be advised

Members are asked to help with guest speakers. If you able to speak or know of a speaker please let the committee know.

