



Leongatha & District HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mechanics' Institute, McCartin St., Leongatha

Preserving Our Heritage

Newsletter Volume 18 Number 2, April 2021

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Secretary: Lyn Skillern Mobile: 0400249048

Society rooms number: 56622492

The Society rooms are open Thursdays and Fridays between 12 & 4pm

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Latest News

Working bee 14 April

A working bee is being planned to help organise our rooms and set up new displays. We intend to have two sessions one from 10 am to 12 noon and the other 1 pm to 3 pm. Please let us know if you are available for one of these times to help us get back to full operation.

Email leongathahistory@gmail.com or call 0400249048.

Anzac lunch

Our Anzac lunch will be held at the Leongatha RSL at 12 noon on 21 April. The meal will be followed by a talk by Lyn Skillern on the men and women of Woorayl Shire who lost their lives in WWII. Please let Lyn know if you wish to attend by calling 0400249048. Friends of members are most welcome.

Cataloguing

There is much cataloguing to be done. We need people to assist with this by learning to complete cataloguing sheets and then start on the cataloguing back log. Pat will explain the process. Please help if you can.

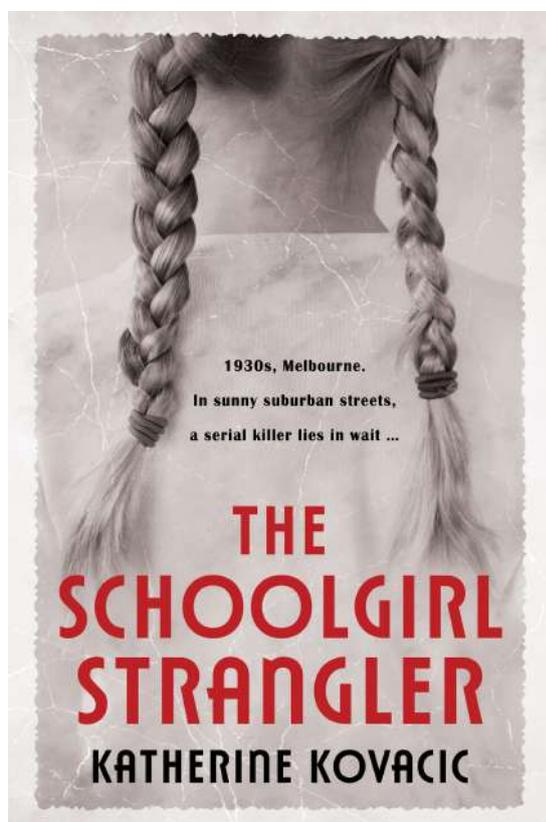
GAAHS (The Gippsland Association of Affiliated Historical Societies)

The annual meeting will be held in Yarram on 22 May. Last year's meeting was cancelled. A program will be circulated in the near future.

Meeniyah Historical Society is reforming. We wish them all the best and will be helping them along the way.

A new publication

Katherine Kovacic has written a book about the serial killer Arnold Soderman. He was responsible for the murder of Ethel Belshaw of Tarwin Meadows and June Rushmere of Leongatha in the 1930s. Soderman also murdered other girls in Melbourne. We assisted Katherine with her research last year and look forward to meeting her in person. Katherine kindly donated us a copy of *The Schoolgirl Strangler* for our collection.



Emergency Services

We are working on our new display on Emergency Services. This will take time to set up and help is required. Alan McGuinness is coordinating this project.

Mossvale Park

A big thank you to Rodney Emmersen and Richard Lester for telling us something of the history of Mossvale park at our March meeting. They both have a passion for the park, its trees and its future and work hard to preserve this heritage icon in our area for the generations to come. *The Story of Mossvale Park* by Ellen Lyndon is available for sale at our rooms and the story is told by Richard on the attached website

https://www.visitpromcountry.com.au/uploads_files/mossvale-park-1.pdf.

Here are two small extracts from that website.

‘After migrating from the United Kingdom in 1851 and going to Ballarat, Francis Moss established a 17acre nursery/garden at Buninyong to supply the goldfields in 1853. He made plans for fiancée Sarah Kingsford to emigrate and join him. His Mossmont Nursery (now at Monbulk) grew and sold red, white and yellow gooseberries, strawberries, red and black currants, plums, cherries and rhubarb. Moss grew many vegetables too, and learned some Cantonese so that he could converse with the Chinese he employed to work in his gardens. He imported seed from England, France and Italy, and supplied many of the Chinese market gardeners in Ballarat. He imported thousands of daffodil bulbs, and birds like thrushes and goldfinches. Five generations of the Moss family have continued in the nursery trade’

‘1888. Francis Moss and his second wife Augusta settled at Mossvale Park, on his 1,000 acres of virgin forest and begins nursery development. Part of the property was originally selected by Mr Bernard Farrell, via the 1878 Land Board. Mr Bruce is the first nursery manager.’

Feature article: Remembering Des Maxted for Anzac Day 2021

Air Force Sergeant Des Maxted of the 75th Squadron lost his life on Monday 9 October 1944 at Noemfoor, New Guinea, aged 31. His parents were Reg and Nellie Maxted of Leongatha. Des was married to Dorothy Maxted nee Wightman and had a baby son Reg.

Des was born in Canterbury in England on 31 May 1913 and came to Leongatha with his family at the age of 9. The family lived in Jeffery Street Leongatha. Des attended Leongatha State School and Leongatha High School and on leaving school became a mechanic. His father ran a business making cabins for trucks, cars and trailers and was a notable sign writer. Des ran a garage on the corner of Bair St and Church St Leongatha, and at the time of his enlistment was recorded as being a garage proprietor. In the days before school buses Des drove a car out to Wild Dog Valley to collect 3 children and take them to High School. Enlisting in the Air Force in July 1940, Des spent time at Amberley Air Force Base in Queensland before going to New Guinea. In New Guinea on the island of Noemfoor, Des went out with a group in a small boat to collect equipment which floated out to sea in a storm. The boat capsized and Des was unfortunately drowned when washed away from a raft. His mother Mrs Nellie Maxted organised with Leongatha High School that a shield in Des' honour become the house swimming trophy. This trophy was used from 1961 until 1989. Des Maxted's son Reg also attended Leongatha High School.



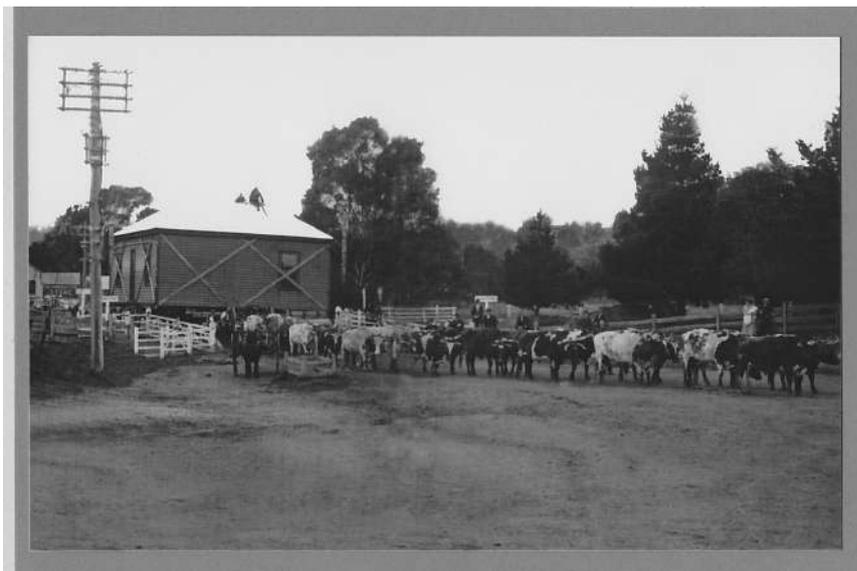
The following letter was provided by Des' nephew Geoff Dean. The unknown writer from Leongatha explained the circumstances of his death.

This is an account on how Sgt Des Maxted met his death. On the morning of the 9 October 1944 roughly 8.30 pm Des with three of his boys went out in a small boat to tow in a raft which had broken loose from its moorings during the heavy seas the night before. When they reached the sea was running very fast and they were unable to bring it in. Des went back to the shore to pick up a couple more boys to give them a hand. When they arrived at the raft for the second time it had reached the edge of the reef. The six of them decided to get into the boat and tow it to the shore. A twenty-foot wave broke over the boat and it sank within a few minutes. A chap from another Squadron who was in the vicinity went to their rescue in a small skiff. He took on board one boy who could not swim to the raft and returned for a second. Two others set off for the shore to get help but they could not make it so returned to the raft. The chap in the skiff by this time had broken his paddle and was unable to get to Des as he had been caught in the under tow and was taken over the reef. They saw him a few times between waves, then he went out of sight and that was the last they saw of him. I was informed of his death about an hour after but I could not believe it as the night before Bob McIndoe, Des and myself went to church, then we played cards with Des and his F/g mate. That night Des was orderly sergeant and he had to have us earlier than usual, so we had supper then we went back to our respective squadrons and that was the last I saw of him. Everyone that knew him in the squadron always had a very good word for him. I met several of his boys the same day at the YMCA and they came up to me and each one said, 'well the workshop will not be the same now Des has gone'. I didn't know one of the boys who spoke to me but they remembered me through Des as I used to go down to his workshop during the week to see him, and he introduced me to quite a few and also told them we came from the same town. Last night I went to church at Des' squadron as it was a service for those who had lost their lives during the week in operations. The padre spoke very highly of Des as he was one of the most liked boys the squadron had. Myself, I miss him very much. Sunday night was the only night of the week I looked forward to. He was a member of 75 Fighter Squadron.

The writer of this letter was an unknown airman from Leongatha. Any help in identifying him would be most welcome.

A house on the move

This new photo was posted on our Facebook page by Jenny Kerry (nee Murphy). It is Jenny's great grandfather Sam Chisholm (married to Alice Maria Riseley) and his bullock team moving Bob Smith's house through the railway gates in 1918.



Membership form. For the Year 2020-2021

A reminder that your 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 to leongathahistory@gmail.com
You can copy this form, paste it to a new document and email back to us.
or post to
PO Box 431 Leongatha 3953

New memberships are welcome or updating your details by completing the form below:

Membership type: Single \$30 Couple/Family \$40

Name:

Address:
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Telephone:

E-Mail: