

Korumburra and District Historical Society Inc.

NEWSLETTER No. 34 March, April, May 2020

We're well and truly into the year, and already there has been a lot of effort go into a display at the **Korumburra Show**, which proved to be very interesting to all of those passing by on the day. Thankyou to all of those who put in such a large effort to make this the success it was. Our special thanks to Sue Ritchie who works untiringly in putting together a wonderful exhibition for the show. We also recognise the research of Rhonda Brooks. Rhonda uncovered copious amounts of photos and information and early photos which we were able to display, and copies of which will be added to our collection. This was the 125th. Korumburra Show, so something of an accomplishment for all concerned in the organising of the event. The first show was held in the Mechanics Hall, recently completed, and standing on the high point of the town in Station Street. Our local paper in the week preceding the show had in it a wonderful history of the show's 125 years.

The first meeting of the **Historical Society** has come and gone. Hughie Hendry spoke to those in attendance, about the creation and life of Karmai the worm which became the symbol of the Karmai parade. He took us through the original concept, the building of the worm itself, its hatching out, and its participation in many **Karmai parades in Korumburra**, and also making the big time in appearing in the Melbourne Moomba parade, and not just once. There were other creations to keep Karmai company, a grasshopper, a blow fly and a lyre bird just some of those. Hughie had a vision of something that might promote Coal Creek, and the desire to see this resulted in the birth of the pink worm. It was a wonderful story, and the smiles on the faces of those who had experienced the parade and were taken back to that time, were an indication of just how much enjoyment there had been at the time, and of the fond memories of the time. For others, it meant a stretching of the imagination, as it is almost not possible to realise that 10,000 people gathered in Korumburra for a street parade. Thankyou to Hughie for the memories, and his huge involvement in this whole exercise, to say nothing of his energy and enthusiasm which were so much in evidence in the early days of Coal Creek.

Our meetings in the next three months will be held at 7.00 p.m. on **Thursday 5th**.

March, Thursday 2nd. April and Thursday 7th. May. Speakers for the meetings in April and May are not yet finalised, but there is always something of interest for all of those attending. Elini Courvisanos, recently employed on a six month contract by the South Gippsland will speak to us at the meeting in March. As we understand it, Elini has been employed to update the heritage study undertaken by the shire in 2004.

An article in a recently digitised copy of the Great Southern Advocate gave the dates for agricultural shows in the area; the shows at this time were held on Wednesdays. The year was **1934**: Dalyston, 7th. February; Lang, 14th. February; Leongatha, 21st. February; Korumburra, 28th. February; Warragul, 7th. March; Yarram, 14th. March; Foster, 21st. March. Seven shows, and now that is reduced to (is it?) three, in Korumburra, Warragul and Wonthaggi.

The following article is a time capsule type of find of our area in 1912, as to why it appears in the Huon Times is one question that arises. Look out for the 'smiling farms and snug homesteads' and the sedate cows and families.

From the 'Huon Times', Saturday 21 September 1912 comes the following.

Korumburra & District 1912

Twenty-five years ago Korumburra, then but a name, was proclaimed a township; that was in December 1887. Kangaroos, wallabies, 'possums and native bears roamed at will through the dense forest which has now given way before the axe of the invading pioneer, and is replaced by a prosperous and important South Gippsland town, in railway, telegraph, telephonic and postal communication with Melbourne, 70 miles away, with municipal hall, commodious halls, churches, excellent gravitation scheme of water supply pure from the uplands on the north of the township, municipal electric light supply, and the largest and most up-to-date butter factory under one roof in the State (that is excepting those which have established branches and creameries). After the disastrous boom years, when banks and financial institutions crashed and involved thousands in ruin, Korumburra rose on a wave of prosperity following the discovery of payable coal seams, and the coal industry gave employment to hundreds, perhaps thousands, including the mines at Jumbunna and Outtrim; but coal has had to give place to the butter industry, which is the chief pursuit at the present time, though the Austral mine, economically worked by a working proprietary of four members (Mr. P. Hudson manager) without the dead weight of an expensive Melbourne office and extravagant directorate, is giving good results to all – the consumer who gets good coal, the miner who gets a good wage, and the working company which gets a satisfactory return for money invested and labor expended on their lease. The results of the big 1903 strike which occurred just prior to Victoria's memorable strike of railway men has left its mark on the industry, and the Jumbunna mine, which has just settled (July) some minor trouble with the men is on the road to recovery after nine years of hard work. Outtrim mine has spent large sums in development, being hindered by the faulty nature of the country. The big strike gave a set-back to the industry, but since its settlement progress has been steady and sure and solid. The unwholesome "boom" element has disappeared.

The opening of the railway line in 1891 was a red-letter day. Hundreds of thousands of acres of land equal to the famous Western District were already selected, and the clearing process has been steadily proceeding all these years. Smiling farms and snug homesteads now adorn the South Gippsland hills and the quiet, sedate cow, with her sisters, female cousins, aunts and mother, yield a veritable golden milk. Twelve years ago the Korumburra and District Co-operative Butter Factory Company Ltd. Commenced operations. One enthusiast prophesied that the output would reach 700 tons a year. He was laughed at, and someone unkindly said that he should see a doctor as his mind appeared a bit off. In 1904 the output was 675 tons of butter, and in 1908 728 tons. The company has paid away in bonuses and dividends £19,000 in twelve years. Proprietary factories at Ruby, Loch, Bena, Lang, and Melbourne compete for cream, and there are co-operative factories at Leongatha Poowong, Kongwak and Archie's Creek.

South Gippsland is a country of immense possibilities, but it must be treated in a scientific manner. It has problems of its own which cannot be solved by theories which have held good in other parts of the State. Its chief problem is transportation. Served by three lines of railway – the main Gippsland-Melbourne to Bairnsdale, the South-Eastern Melbourne to Port

Albert, and the Nyora-Powlett River-Wonthaggi coal line, the two main lines have cockspurs, and another is recommended from Kooweerup to the Strzelecki Hills – railway facilities are good but roads are the heart-breaking drawback.

The rugged nature of the country was unknown to the Government engineers a quarter of a century ago. They sat in their offices perhaps, and at random marked out the roads with parallel rulers and pencil, which looked nice and methodical on the plan, each square of which only required colouring, and a gigantic draught-board was revealed upon which they could spend the rest of their time in the fascinating pastime of chess or draughts. When shire engineers and selectors came to locate these roads some went up hills with a grade of 1 in 1½; others stopped at the top of precipices with a drop to the bottom of 100 feet. Flying machines were not then a commercial proposition, and consequently shire councils have expended thousands of pounds deviating the absurd thoroughfares and paying heavily for land and works to give the selectors an outlet. In justice and compensation for this huge departmental blunder, South Gippsland deserved well of the Government in the matter of substantial financial assistance for road-making. Korumburra is the chief town of the shire of Poowong and Jeetho, constituted in 1891 after the days of the three-pounds-to-one subsidy, and this shire has now on hand many deviations to make good grades for the farmers to get their produce to market by the least expensive method. We read a lot about the necessity for irrigation in Northern Victoria, and all that has been said and written can be doubly emphasised in regard to the road problem of South Gippsland. If an army of engineers were turned loose and given instructions to get the best grades for all roads, at whatever cost, the final result would still pay Australia.

South Gippsland was almost consumed by the terrific bush fires of '97 and '98 and the "bush-fire year" is a land-mark in local history. But, Phoenix-like, it rose from its ashes and when the starving stock came on from North Victoria in the dreaded drought years owners and stock received a hospitable welcome from South Gippslanders. The bush fires, though temporarily embarrassing, did untold good by clearing away much debris and timber which would have taken years to get rid of. Blessed by an all-bountiful Providence with an assured rainfall, droughts are unknown in this the garden of Victoria. It offers every opportunity for closer settlement and intense culture. The holdings average at a rough guess 200 or 300 acres, while generally speaking prominent, well-to-do and self-made farmers considered that 80 to 100 acres will give a comfortable living to an industrious settler. The rapid improvement of the various milking machines will make dairying a pleasure and South Gippsland is now ripe for a vigorous policy of closer settlement with safeguards to prevent aggregation of estates. Increased facilities for scientific and technical education are necessary so that the rising generation may be well equipped to go on the land to solve the never-ending problems which present themselves. Notwithstanding indifference on the part of the authorities, Gippsland's rate of progress measured by that of older countries has been marvellous. The spirit of the old pioneers has been the guiding force, but signs are not wanting to indicate that with the passing of those sturdy empire builders across "that bourne whence no traveller returns," their moving force is passing too, and despite the bounteous regards smiling nature offers to those who breach the store-house of her wealth, the lure of the city draws as the magnet, and unless an effort is made now in the beginning the city will exert her spell and rural progress will be retarded.

With the increase in comfort, practically all farmers are devoting their time to improvement of their herds and flocks, and already appreciable numbers of prizes from the Sydney and Melbourne shows are finding their way to what was once known as the "back blocks of Gippsland," notably so in connection with pure swine. Messrs. F.E. Kurrle, T.G. Abbot, E. Jenkins and T.K. Adkins being owners

of champion breeds. In cattle, sheep and horses rapid improvement is being made. The Korumburra Agricultural Society (Mr. P.H. Watkinson secretary) give over £400 in prizes yearly for their show in February, and exhibits from great distances are attracted.

In closing my remarks, allow me to observe that Mr. Jonathan Proud, manager of the Korumburra butter factory, is a gentleman to whom dairymen throughout the South Gippsland district owe a deep debt of gratitude. Combining expert theoretical knowledge with thorough practical ability and keen business instinct, he has been the guiding star of the successes of the Korumburra butter factory, whose prices for butter-fat and cream are watched and followed by most of the factories in the district; and the product of the factory has built up a reputation for quality and uniformity which may be equalled but not excelled by the much-vaunted Western District product. Dear reader, come and settle in beautiful Gippsland, or send your farmer friend here; he will be right royally welcome.

For more information please contact secretary, Janet Wilson, (0409 248 603) janet.wilson@dcsi.net.au or P.O. Box 329, KORUMBURRA. Vic. 3950.

President: Mr. Bob Newton Treasurer: Mr. Alwyn Michie Archivist: Mr. Doug Boston
We would be very pleased to welcome new members, so please consider joining us.