



Korumburra & District Historical Society

Newsletter Issue 50 • December 2023

Established 1967

**Korumburra and District
Historical Society Incorporated**

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ABN 76 768 108 144

Korumburra Community Hub
Little Commercial Street
Korumburra

Website

www.korumburrahistory.com.au

Committee

President: Bob Newton

Secretary: Janet Wilson

Treasurer: Barbara Burton

Newsletter Sub-Committee

Janet Wilson

Linda Fisher

Gerald Brocklesby

Contact

@korumburrahistory.com.au

Monthly Meetings

Public meetings of the Society are held
on the first Thursday of the month.
New members are welcome.

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A view of the Society's new rooms in the Korumburra Community Hub.

President's Annual Report

Well, the last few years have been very tough ones, to say the least. What with a couple of years of covid, and at the start of this year we lost our Secretary and Treasurer, thankfully we had a couple of members who shared these roles, but we survived, thanks to these members who stepped in. And then with the threat of losing our premises, we had to prepare to move, then the major work began, fortunately HELEN COMER stepped in, with some very good helpers, in packing all our valuable archives that our previous members had accumulated over the years, what would we have done without Helen. And after two containers packed to the top, with the expert help of Mark at Wonthaggi removals, we were on the move. But it has not been all bad, as we had a wonderful guest speaker in Ray Argento, who was one of the nine students and the teacher who were kidnapped at the Wooreen state school, Ray kept us enlightened on this story, how it started and unfolded right through the whole journey, you could hear a pin drop, this must have been very traumatic for the students and the teacher, parents and all the

people who helped in the rescue. But it is all part of our history.

In a much more positive step in moving into the new Hub, and where does it all fit, once again Helen took control of the situation with her band of helpers and a big thank you to all who have helped in our move. I believe it is going to work well in the new building. I personally want it to work with the help of our members and we are looking forward to attracting new and younger members, also a very big thank you to Gerald Brocklesby and Doug Boston for all their help with the plaque and flyers, and to Peter Cook in all his assistance.

And on a sad note, we lost one of our members – Alec Harris.

I would like to thank the Commonwealth Bank of Leongatha, especially Keyur Parikh the Branch Manager, for assisting us in securing the prize money of \$500 that we were nominated for.

Thank you to all of our members for their continued support over the last year and I wish all incoming office bearers all the best for the next year.

Robert (Bob) Newton

Special Report

The ribbon is finally cut – celebrating a bold new look for Korumburra's history

The new meeting rooms and work space will provide a welcome breath of fresh air for the Korumburra & District Historical Society.



Milpara president Neil Coxon, Myli Libraries CEO Leanne Williams, Upper House Member for Eastern Victoria Tom McIntosh, K&DHS president Bob Newton and South Gippsland Shire Council mayor Nathan Hersey.



The display cabinet houses a collection of the society's historical memorabilia.

After the turbulent years of COVID, the new facilities will make for a much needed opportunity for the society to return to its former purpose as custodians of a vast and valuable collection of historical documents and artefacts and of providing information about the lives of the people in Korumburra and the surrounding district.

We really have had a difficult time with little space between a small COVID recovery and then having to pack and move all of the society's archives and belongings, move them into storage, and then the next move into the Hub.

However the future looks bright. A future, we hope that matches the boldness and possibility of the new Hub building. We have a wonderful new room to house our collection, and a magnificent display area in which to set up interesting displays of the district's history.

As we prepare this edition of our newsletter, the Hub has been officially opened and the society is enjoying the promise of greater things to come. We might need a little time in which to familiarize ourselves with the newly located items that we have in our care. This will bring us the opportunity to involve more of our members with the ability to undertake research, to catalogue, and thus be available to man the room.

A new start, in a new location.

Why not consider joining us as we go into the future.

The next meeting of the society will be on 7 December at 7.00pm in the Korumburra Hub building.

Dennis Conn will be speaking about his experiences of Korumburra in the fifties and sixties, in particular remembering the Mine Road area, shops etc.

Visitors are always welcome, and we would really welcome new members. Come along and visit us and see the new building. There will not be a meeting in January, but it will be back to business in February with the first meeting for 2024 to be held at the Hub on Thursday 3 February at 7.00pm.

We are more than happy to help people researching their families or seeking help in finding information on the history of Korumburra and the area of the former Korumburra Shire. Contact secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au. It would be good to make this contact to make an initial enquiry or to check that there will be people available at the Historical Society room.

Newsletter Contributions

Do you have any contributions, stories to share, or feedback for this newsletter?

Contact Janet Wilson, secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au

The Korumburra Brass Bands Mace

A brief history of the Shire of Korumburra's Brass Band and the Bands Mace which was donated to the former Korumburra Shire Council and later due to Council amalgamations became the property of the South Gippsland Shire Council.

Written by Dennis Conn

The Korumburra Brass Band was formed during the period of the former Shire of Korumburra Council and was comprised of local and district people, supported by their wives and residents. The band member's leader – master and president was the late Mr Charlie Baxter, his occupation being the dairy inspector for the Korumburra rural district. He and his wife Esme were ardent supporters of the Brass Band and put a great deal of time and effort into fund raising to support and sustain it, along with the members of its auxiliary and the committee of the marching girls which operated in association with the band. The marching girls leader and committee chair person was the late Mrs Myrtle Wrench.

Shortly after the band formed, they acquired a wooden staff, also known as a mace, usually adorned with metal decorative sections. A mace was not just a decorative item but had a practical purpose. The leader and master of the band at the head of a parade, would use his mace to give directions to those marching behind him, indicating with the mace when to stop, turn left or right, march on the spot and various other movements in tune with the music being played, the mace often being twirled.

Supporters of the band raised money for the purchase of a mace by holding home-made cake stalls and raffles. A magnificent mace, with silver ornamentation was purchased after a great deal of fund raising and effort, it was used for many years as an integral part of the Korumburra Brass Band whenever there was a street parade, social event, or celebrations that were enhanced by the band's presence.

Unfortunately after many years of service some of the band members due to their age or ill health could no longer continue. Charlie Baxter passed away in 1970 at a comparatively young age, the late Herb Kemp became the band master but membership dwindled and around 1980 the band was no longer functioning. In 1983 the remaining members of the Brass

Band auxiliary and the committee of the marching girls handed over the funds they were holding to the Korumburra Shire Council, a cheque for \$1,200.00 which paid for the purchase of a piano for Korumburra's new recreation centre.

The last visible remnant of the Brass Band, their magnificent mace was also given to the Korumburra Shire Council. A secure glass case was made for it along with a plaque that explained its history, it was displayed just inside the Korumburra Shire Council Offices main entrance as a tangible object of Korumburra's recent history, an object to be valued.

After council amalgamations, the mace was placed in a corner of what had become the art gallery. A music teacher from the Leongatha Secondary College asked South Gippsland Shire Council to borrow it to be used by his college band on Armistice Day at Meeniyan. It was later returned to the South Gippsland Shire Council, now the legitimate owner of it.

The mace is a valuable item, not only in monetary terms but more importantly historical terms, it may be seen as a portal through which one can catch a glimpse of a vibrant period of our local history.

As a former long – term employee of both the former Shire of Korumburra, the South Gippsland Shire Council and also a life time resident, I have a thorough knowledge of the journey the mace has been on, both in and out of our community. It is a part of our social history, a reminder of an often colourful post war period in the twentieth century. While that period was for most people a demanding time of long working hours, dedication to family and community, the mace was frequently raised during a time that focused on attachment to a mother country through empire day parades, music filled agricultural and pastoral shows, and local festival parades. It has the power to bring back pleasant memories for older residents. The Mace may also introduce new or younger residents and visitors alike, to



The Korumburra Brass Bands Mace at home in the Community Hub.

a period in our community history that had many enjoyable social events and they are no doubt mentioned in records of today's Historical Society or old local newspapers, events all of which were of Korumburra's own making. I urge all members of our Historical Society and the general community to prize the Mace as one of the few remaining irreplaceable symbols of our community's history prior to Shire Council amalgamations and take delight in it being returned home to adorn our most impressive Community Hub, which our society is indeed fortunate to have been given a place in.

The Race for the Mace

After hearing that the former Brass Band Mace was not held at the offices of SGSC but had remained with the Leongatha Secondary College Music Teacher after he had borrowed it several years ago for a one-day program but had not returned it. I wrote a brief history of the Brass Band and its Mace and emailed a copy to Ms Rachel Jones Historical and Cultural Items collections officer. Her reply made it quite clear that there were others who were making a claim upon the mace as, on the 20th October she informed me that she could now see from my document that the historical society's preference was possibly the Hub, which is certainly a possibility but this needed further discussion with various stakeholders but did not name those stakeholders.

I was alarmed at what was being said as I was under the impression that all arrangements

had been made to place the mace in the Hub prior to opening day. I sent a further email to Rachel saying that I had been taken aback because SGSC had not finalised the matter. After informing Helen Comer that it had not been decided to house the mace in the Hub, Helen took the matter up with other staff at SGSC and delivered to the staff who were approached, a copy of my brief history of the band and the mace.

On the 27th October I was informed by Rachel Jones that there had been some confusion about the mace as she had not received documentation that Barbara Look had received prior to her departure from SGSC, when Rachel was not working in her current position in 2021. Rachel apologised for that confusion as she had not seen a letter or emails from our historical society regarding the mace and it

being placed on display at the new hub when the building was completed. Rachel informed me that SGSC now held the mace and arrangements were being made to have the glass and its case be repaired and both the case and mace mounted in the hub in time for the opening day.

I believe had it not been for the approach by Helen Comer to senior staff at SGSC, then confusion would have remained and the mounting of the mace in the Hub may not have taken place in time for the opening date or never taken place at all. Even worse would have been a strong the possibility that one other party I now know of, may have laid claim to the mace that was a part of our community, by using less than factual claims of entitlement.

By Dennis Conn

Q&A

We've had enquiries from people wanting to know:

- The history of the Dents' building in Mine Road, and the possibility of a photo. Prior to the time of the Dents building, Mr. LeMaitre had a brickworks on this site.
- Information relating to the Cameron family, in particular that of Edward born in 1942 at Loch, his parents were Hugh and Jessie (nee Wallis).
- The Boyketts had a bakery in Mine Road, in the area that is now the car park for IGA. One of our members has memories of being sent to the shop to buy a loaf of bread. He was overtaken by the urge to pick out some of the lovely fresh bread; his treatment on returning home was such that he did not do this again.
- Names of former presidents of the Korumburra Football Club.
- Information regarding Charles Wallienus Neumann and his family who lived in Korumburra whilst he was the station master at Clyde Railway Station. His father Gus Neumann was a storekeeper of some kind in Korumburra, around 1915.
Where did he live and what activities were the family part of.
- Anyone know anything about the Schlitz name? There are no entries in either the school registers or the cemetery.

It might be that someone reading this will have memories or information that they could share with us. It is most often the case that when someone comes to us seeking information that in return the society is able to add to what is known of a business, a family, some aspect of our history.

History in the Making

Sadly, we bid farewell to some of the icons of King Street.

The brick duplex houses and, the building that started its life as the Shire Council offices – which would go on to become the town's library, meeting rooms, art gallery and home to the Korumburra & District Historical Society. These buildings will soon be replaced by a new supermarket, but the importance they played in the wellbeing, the culture and stories of the community are to be celebrated.



Pioneers

“New Zealand to Poowong — 1878”

This short story I wrote is a ‘faction’ piece ... fiction written around basic facts, about my great, great grandmother arriving here with her 7 children to join their father, her husband LC Holmes who had travelled here a year earlier to purchase land and begin building their home.

By Linda Fisher



This picture shows the landscape as Emma would have first seen it.

It was May 1878, and 29 year old Emma had arrived at their final destination with her 7 children. The land her husband Lawrence had begun to clear for their new family home.

When Lawrence Holmes had to leave New Zealand in a hurry due to a ‘problem’, he took the advice of his brother Ed and headed for Australia. To the newly settled area of South Gippsland, Victoria, soon to be known as Poowong.

Now, a year later, the family were all together again.

It had been a long journey, first by ship to Melbourne. Then 3 days travelling, the last day on foot. With the track only wide enough for the horse carrying their belongings, the family walked in single file.

Exhausted after the long walk on the muddy track, Emma’s heart sank as she looked past her children to the clearing that was her new home.

A small area of the enormous forest had been cleared, but the only building was a 4ft high wall made of rocks. Unfortunately Lawrence hadn’t progressed very far with their house, the priority had been on the chopping down of trees and clearing the undergrowth of ferns and sword grass away.

‘Come on children, Will and Edward unpack the blankets from the horse. We need to make a tent, it will be dark soon.’ encouraged Emma, trying to sound positive. ‘Rob, take John and Percy and try and find dry kindling, we must get a fire started. Dolly, please hold the baby and amuse her.’

Lawrence looked at his wife with admiring eyes.

And so began life at ‘Castle Comfort’.

This is the first in a series of stories to appear in this spot over the coming issues, where Linda puts her words to the real life adventures of her pioneer family, one of the first to settle in Korumburra.

Korumburra State School Swimming Pool

Recently, during excavation work at the Korumburra Primary School, the remains of the old swimming pool were uncovered. After hearing a few questions around town about it, it was decided others would also be interested in the origins of the pool.

First, trying Trove, all that could be found were advertisements for fund-raisers to raise money for it, so then looking at a treasure trove of information... ‘Where have the years gone?’, the book written by Wilma P. Walls for the 100th anniversary of the Korumburra State School.

In 1922 the school committee approached the Department of Education for funds, “and when the Department refused to grant a subsidy for the work, the Committee and the Ladies Auxiliary raised the full cost of £550.” No wonder there were so many advertisements for fund-raising in articles found on Trove.



The pool was 66ft by 33ft, 20m x 10m, and 4ft 6in at the deep end up to 2ft 6in at the shallow end (1.37m to 76cm), and the Head Teacher was delegated the job of being in charge of the pool. He had to arrange supervisors for when children were swimming on Saturdays, school holidays, and after school (there was no swimming on Sundays), and also had to keep the pool clean. No chemicals in those days, just flushing the dirty water out, and refilling it.

The children from St Joseph’s had use of the pool on Monday mornings and Thursday afternoons.

It was free to swim in the pool, but cost one penny for swimming lessons.

On March the 1st 1924, the pool officially opened. It closed 40 years later, in 1964 when the town pool opened.

VALE

Alec Harris

Valued member Alec Harris, passed away in early October. He had been a member for a number of years, serving a term as vice president.

Alec's grandparents, George and Lottie Dunstan were on a property in Inlet Road, Bena and it was here that Alec lived with his wife Lyn.

Alec had fond memories of time spent at Bena in his younger years. Lyn and Alec had knowledge of the duplex buildings in King Street as Alec's uncle, Keith Dunstan, lived his later years in one of these. Alec had roots deep in the history of our area. We remember him fondly, and send thoughts of sincere sympathy to his wife Lyn.

Thank you

Some of our members have done a sterling job in moving our resources from the King Street premises into storage, and then retrieving it and locating it into the new Hub building.

Chief among those to receive the thanks of all members is Helen Comer. What could we have done without her. Thank you so much Helen.

Thank you too to Pam Adkins who has taken on work in many areas of the society's administration in the time when we were without permanent office bearers. A big bunch of thank yous to Pam.

Our people would also want to thank personnel at the South Gippsland Shire, among those whose light has shone brightly is Peter Cook. Thank you so much Peter for your help in so many areas.

Bookshop

The following books are currently available for purchase from the Historical Society by contacting the Secretary by email: secretary@korumburrahhistory.com.au

The Land of the Lyre Bird	\$40
The History of the Shire of Korumburra by Joseph White	\$15
A Gippsland Union, the Victorian Coal Miners Association 1893-1915 by P.D. Gardner	\$5
Coal Creek Miners Memorial, Compiled by Doug Boston & Janet Wilson	\$10

Membership Application

2023-2024

From 1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024

I/we

Of (address)

Phone Nos

Email

Agree to comply with the Rules of Korumburra & District Historical Society Inc. and support the purposes of the Association.

Signed

Date

Fees are:

For 2023-24 Financial Year are:

Single Membership: \$15.00 – entitled to one vote

Family Membership: \$25.00 – entitled to one vote

Corporate Membership \$50.00 – entitled to one vote

For direct deposit of Fees our account is:

Commonwealth Bank, Leongatha

BSB: 063 515 Account Number: 10014263

Please use your name and membership in the reference.

Either post this completed form to us at the postal address above or submit it online.

To submit online: scan and email this form to treasurer@korumburrahhistory.com.au along with a copy of your bank deposit receipt.

The committee would like to know if you have any particular interest, experience or qualifications.

Website www.korumburrahhistory.com.au

Email treasurer@korumburrahhistory.com.au