



# Korumburra & District Historical Society

Newsletter Issue 56 • Winter 2025

Established 1967

**Korumburra and District  
Historical Society Incorporated**

A0034717Y

ABN 76 768 108 144

Korumburra Community Hub  
Little Commercial Street  
Korumburra

## Website

[www.korumburrahistory.com.au](http://www.korumburrahistory.com.au)

## Committee

**President:** Bob Newton

**Secretary:** Janet Wilson

**Treasurer:** Barbara Burton

## Newsletter Sub-Committee

Janet Wilson

Linda Fisher

Gerald Brocklesby

## Contact

[secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au](mailto:secretary@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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## From the Secretary

We've had some interesting things come our way in the last little while, among them a visit from members of the Mornington Historical Society. There's more about this further along in our newsletter.

We had a visit again from John Parker, former Surveyor General of Victoria. John held this position from 1989 until 1998, when he was appointed Registrar of Geographic Names. He spoke to us this time on "Place Names". I didn't realise just what is involved in the naming of places, and how this works on a world wide scale and he concluded with names in our own locality. John went on to talk about how the borders of our local areas can and have changed – sometimes many times. There is a web site detailing this. Asked about his favourite name he thought briefly and answered that it would 'Ripplebrook', which happens to be where he lives now; the name being suggested by his mother. A really interesting afternoon was enjoyed by those who attended.

We've had an enquiry from a lady wanting to know more about the employment of women in the Victorian Railways. This led to us realising that in the main here, we have had women employed in the refreshment room at the Korumburra station, and as gatekeepers. This in turn led us to thinking about families that were at the gatehouse at Whitelaw. There is a little more on this in this current newsletter.

We hope you find what we have been able to put together for this issue enjoyable.

## Newsletter Contributions

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

Contact Janet Wilson:

[secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au](mailto:secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au)

## Society Meetings

The next meetings of the society will be held in the Korumburra Hub building on Thursday 5 June, 3 July & 7 August at 1:00pm.

These times may change, so please could you confirm the time with us if you wish to attend. Visitors are always welcome, and we would really welcome new members.

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](mailto: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.

## Korumburra's Forgotten Avenue "International Avenue" in Bridge Street

By Marion Shuttleworth



PRINCES STREET	JAMES STREET	VICTORIA STREET
1. AUSTRALIA	21. AUSTRALIA	41. AUSTRALIA
2. CANADA	22. CANADA	42. CANADA
3. INDIA	23. INDIA	43. INDIA
4. AUSTRALIA	24. AUSTRALIA	44. AUSTRALIA
5. CANADA	25. CANADA	45. CANADA
6. INDIA	26. INDIA	46. INDIA
7. AUSTRALIA	27. AUSTRALIA	47. AUSTRALIA
8. CANADA	28. CANADA	48. CANADA
9. INDIA	29. INDIA	49. INDIA
10. AUSTRALIA	30. AUSTRALIA	50. AUSTRALIA
11. CANADA	31. CANADA	51. CANADA
12. INDIA	32. INDIA	52. INDIA
13. AUSTRALIA	33. AUSTRALIA	53. AUSTRALIA
14. CANADA	34. CANADA	54. CANADA
15. INDIA	35. INDIA	55. INDIA
16. AUSTRALIA	36. AUSTRALIA	56. AUSTRALIA
17. CANADA	37. CANADA	57. CANADA
18. INDIA	38. INDIA	58. INDIA
19. AUSTRALIA	39. AUSTRALIA	59. AUSTRALIA
20. CANADA	40. CANADA	60. CANADA

Have you ever noticed the mismatched trees that line Bridge Street between Princes Street and Mine Road? They are in stark contrast to the orderly avenues of trees that grace the surrounding streets. A stroll along Bridge Street reveals three different species of oak, along with various cedars and firs, a flowering cherry, a ginkgo, a Magnolia grandiflora, and more. It looks like someone walked into a tree farm and bought one of everything. And, indeed, that is almost the case.

The Argus newspaper reports that in August 1956 Korumburra was "host to the world" when a thousand residents witnessed consuls and representatives from forty-three countries planting a tree native to their country in Bridge Street. This significant avenue of trees is dedicated to the pioneers of nations with membership of Rotary International. It was organised by Jim Proudfoot, a past president of the Korumburra Rotary Club. At the time Mr Proudfoot said "These trees will grow in peace, and may the nations represented grow likewise." Sir Angus Mitchell, Australia's first president of Rotary International planted the international tree, *Stenocarpus sinuatus* (Firewheel tree), opposite St. Joseph's School where it flowers to this day. Dennis Conn was a pupil at the State School at the time and well remembers the excitement of the day: a parade

of flags, a brass band, and trees being planted. Two years later in July 1958 there was more excitement when the then Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, visited Korumburra and planted a tree to complete the avenue.

It is almost 70 years since "International Avenue" was planted and, while there has been change, much has been retained. Global change means some countries, such as Ceylon and Nyasaland, have new names. Locally the history of this avenue appears to have been lost from common knowledge. While many of the trees, such as *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* (Dawn Redwood) have not been able to reach their full potential because of the power lines it is encouraging to see that when trees have needed to be replaced that has been done with reference to the original intention. Rare species

including *Liriodendron tulipifera* (Tulip Tree) and *Arbutus unedo* (Strawberry Tree) remain. It will come as no surprise that England planted an English Oak and Canada a maple, but some of the other choices are more obscure. Sadly, some trees are missing altogether. One such is the *Lagerstroemia indica* planted by India which, coincidentally, was originally located directly outside what is now Divas Tandoori Indian Restaurant.

The Korumburra and District Historical Society has copies of the original tree list and plan for the avenue but it appears these were not strictly adhered to. We hope to be able to provide a map of the avenue reflecting the current situation in a later newsletter.

It is extraordinary to think that forty-three nations came together co-operatively on a winter's day in Korumburra to plant trees. "International Avenue" deserves to be remembered, and to be seen as was intended, an enduring symbol of peace and friendship.

*Acknowledgements: Thank you to Alwyn Michie and Linda Fisher for their assistance with research, to Dennis Conn for sharing his recollections.*

## The Whitelaw Gatehouse

By Janet Wilson

**The gatehouse was situated on the north side of the railway line at Whitelaw. Little remains now of how this used to be.**

The gatehouse was situated on the north side of the railway line at Whitelaw. Little remains now of how this used to be. In the area where Jumbunna Road leaves the present highway which wasn't there in the days of the gates. There is an area on the other side of the road and that is where the road and railway crossing complete with gates used to be. The road continued on up the hill to join Bena-Korumburra Road.

The James family may have been the first family at the gatehouse, the photo of them is thought to have been taken in the early 1900s. We don't know how long they stayed. The next family we know of is that of Ray and Eunice Steele who were there in the mid forties. After the Steeles came the Doak family and it is thought that Bob and Betty Barnes were the next keepers of the gates. Betty Barnes will be remembered by some of us coming out to open the gates. Betty and Bob lived at Whitelaw for some time, settling earlier for a short time at Bena, and moving to Whitelaw in 1956.

The crossing at the gates was closed to traffic from 1 October 1963. Tenders for the removal of the railway building were called in mid 1971. The opening of the "by pass" section of the South Gippsland Highway took place on 29 May, 1961.

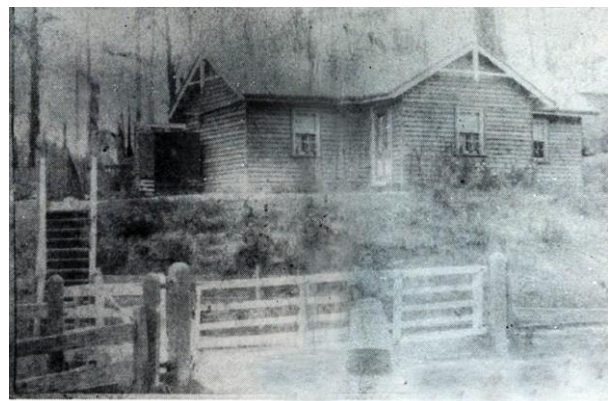
This is a patchy account of this section of our history. We could do to know more, so if you are reading this and can fill in some detail please contact us.



**The Tyers family outside Whitelaw gatekeeper's house and gates. They operated these crossing gates for quite some years.**



**A sepia photograph of the Whitelaw Railway Gate House. Sign reads "Beware of Trains, Look Both Ways Before Crossing" Lady Unknown.**

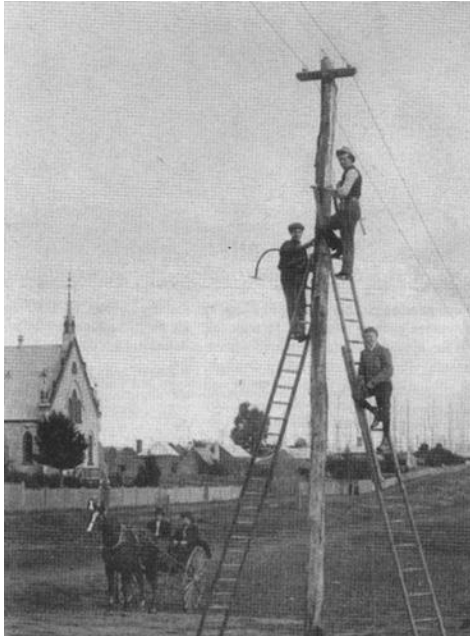


**Whitelaw Railway gates. Gate-keeper's house in background, shadowy female figure in foreground. Description states that the woman was nursing a white cockatoo but not visible in photo.**



## Lighting the Town of Korumburra

From "The Gippsland Historical" • Volume 1, Issue 1



*Installing electricity lines in Korumburra, 1911.*

arrangements with the Korumburra Butter Factory for the supply of electricity from its generating plant to the town. The K.B.F. made an offer which some councillors thought was reasonable, while others objected. Not to be outdone Cr. Kurrle and Cr. Little by a motion persuaded the council to allow the Korumburra riding to raise the sum of £2,000 for the purpose of installing electricity in the town.

Some councillors objected to the type of generating plant which was proposed to be used. Council then instructed Crs. Kurrle and Alp to visit some country centres using electricity and report to the council relative to the types of generating plant in use.

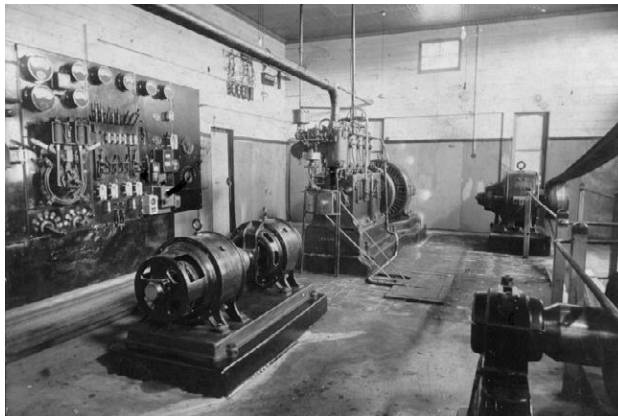
Finally, on the motion of Crs. Kurrle and Adkins, the council agreed to raise the sum of £2,500 for the purpose of installing electricity

in Korumburra. During the next 15 months land was purchased in King street. The necessary finance had been found, council had approved the engineer's plans for the installation, then tenders were invited in March 1910 for the construction of a power house, the installation of the machinery.

A suction gas engine of 75 h.p. and a direct current generator were the subject of a later tender. This contract was won by Wm. McLean & Co. and installed by the company's engineers under the direction of a Mr. Peters. The installation when completed was officially switched on by Mrs. Kurrle on the 28 July, 1910. Cr. Treadwell, the shire president, declared the building open and quoted figures which showed that the whole undertaking costs £3,281.

The Lighting of the Township of Korumburra was the subject of a special committee meeting of the councillors of the Shire of Poowong and Jeetho on the 15th June, 1895, to discuss a proposition made to the shire by a representative of a Melbourne firm for the lighting of the streets and houses by gas. Crs. Mitchell (chairman), Langham, Foreman and Wilson were present. The gas company works in Korumburra to produce gas, to lay gas mains throughout the town, and feeder mains for supplying gas where required. He estimated that the cost of the works would be over £3,000. The committee decided to recommend to the full council that tenders be called by advertisement for town lighting by gas or electricity. At a later stage the council did install gas lights in the town. These were very expensive to operate and not very satisfactory, and, as one man said: 'These lights served only to make the darkness visible.'

The next move to have electricity in Korumburra was made by the then Korumburra Progress Association in 1902. When the proposal came before the council the suggestion of a loan to finance the scheme was met with strong opposition and was again deferred. Nothing further was done until 1908 when Cr. Kurrle suggested that the council make



*Interior of power house at King Street showing generators and machinery that provided electricity for Korumburra.*



*People grouped in front of Power House building. Gathering on the occasion of the switching on of the electric lights ceremony performed by Mrs M E Kurrle.*

## A Visit from Mornington Historical Society

By Libby Gillingham

**I moved to Outtrim last July after nearly 50 years in Mornington. I was a very active member of Mornington and District Historical Society. I became a member at Korumburra a few months ago.**

After 50 years living in Mornington it was quite a change to move to Outtrim last July.

I loved Mornington and was very involved with the community including Mornington and District Historical Society which is located at The Old Post Office Museum.

It has however been a whole new lease of life at 80 to be part of a family venture on a beautiful 10 acre property. I always thought that I would pine for daily sea views but the trees, the birds and the wildlife make up for it. The history of this area is truly incredible and I found myself so warmly welcomed when I first went into the museum in The Hub.

In March this year, 22 of my Mornington Historical friends came in two mini buses to Korumburra/Outtrim.



*Enjoying the rich history at the Korumburra museum*



*Bob put the geography of the area into perspective*



*Val Wilson, Janice Campbell and Barbara Burriss*



*Bob Newton with Karl Lowe*

They enjoyed morning coffee at The Coterie before a visit to the museum. Bob and Alwyn had everyone seated around the beautiful table to share the collections of photographs and screen shots of old Korumburra and Outtrim town.

Mornington Old Post Office is jam packed with wonderful treasures but very short on space and many members were greatly impressed with the compactus filing! So much to see in such a beautiful small space.

All the stories so appreciated by fellow history lovers.

The mini buses stopped at the lookout on Outtrim Moyarra Road and Bob Newton was able to point out where the mines were and stories of early settlers. It was a glorious day and everyone enjoyed lunch in the garden at our home.

Bob and a neighbour, Ian Richards shared more of their local knowledge.

The day went by too quickly but Ian was able to show some of the group the superb collection of old Outtrim photos at the Outtrim hall.

Thank you Korumburra Historical Society for your welcome to my Mornington friends and to me. As one Mornington member said, "The best bus trip ever".

If any Korumburra people would like a day in Mornington I am sure you would have a warm welcome at the museum.



## WARRAGUL-KORUMBURRA ROAD

From West Gippsland Gazette (Warragul) 30 March 1915

Warragul was the first shire to invite the Minister of Public Works, and members of the Main Roads' Board, to the municipality to open the first newly constructed main road. That was Warragul to Drouin. Later on a second invitation was extended to the Minister in connection with the commencement of the important Sea View deviation. Now for a third time the Minister and members of the Board, through Mr. J.E. Mackay, have received an invitation to open the new road from Warragul to Korumburra via Tetoora road on 13 April. The completion of this work gives a fine metal road through from Warragul to Korumburra. The residents intend to give the Ministerial party a good reception, and the president and members of the shire will, of course, be present. Mr. J. Gourlay is taking a leading part in making arrangements and with a fine day, Minister and members will have a special opportunity of seeing the fertility of the Warragul district in what is a period of drought.

## Bookshop

The following books are currently available for purchase from the Historical Society by contacting the Secretary by email: [secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au](mailto:secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au)

The Land of the Lyre Bird	\$40
The History of the Shire of Korumburra by Joseph White	\$20
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

2024-2025

From 1st October 2024 to 30th September 2025

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 .....

**Fee for 2024-25 Financial Year is \$15.00.**

**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 [secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au](mailto:secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au) along with a copy of your bank deposit receipt.

**New memberships received between 30 June and 30 September will expire on 30 September the following year, i.e., up to 15 month initial term.**

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

**Find us on the web:** [www.korumburrahistory.com.au](http://www.korumburrahistory.com.au)

**For queries: Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/korumburrahistory](https://www.facebook.com/korumburrahistory)

**Email:** [treasurer@korumburrahistory.com.au](mailto:treasurer@korumburrahistory.com.au)