

Korumburra & District Historical Society

Newsletter Issue 57 • Spring 2025

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

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Secretary: Janet Wilson

Treasurer: Barbara Burton

Newsletter Sub-Committee

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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 got a new display in the cabinet in the hub, all very interesting, so, please remember to go in and have a look at it. We hope you find what we have been able to put together for this issue enjoyable.

- One of our members, Alan McGuinness spoke to us at our last meeting about his Bigelow forbears. This was such an interesting story. Thank you to Alan for sharing this with us. A reminder for folks with Loch connections that Loch is about to celebrate 150 years, with those celebrations to take place on 6, 7, 8 and 9 March 2026.
- A lady in Italy is writing a book about three Italian miners who died in the Jumbunna mine. We hope to have a photo of the Austral Hotel where the bodies were taken prior to burial.
- We have heard from a lady searching for information on the family and history of Charlie and Edith Beard who were dairy farming at Outtrim.
- Do any of our members know how to contact John Dawes. Leon Costermans is seeking to be in touch with him.

- We know the name of James Hardwick, and something of his family, and have had an enquiry from a lady searching for information on Patrick McDonald who was the successor of James in managing the mine. Patrick was the brother of James Harwick's wife.

There is information held in our archives, and quite apart from this it is surprising just how much information each of us has, so we're hoping that we might be able to help the people who enquiring looking for information.

Newsletter Contributions

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

Contact Janet Wilson:

secretary@korumburrahistory.com.au

Society Meetings

The next meetings of the society will be held in the Korumburra Hub building on Thursday 2 October, 6 November & 4 December 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. 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.

Remembering Whitelaw

Compiled by Dennis Conn for the interest of the Korumburra Historical Society and the members who are assisting with the further development of the rail trail through markers that will inform users of historical aspects of the rail trail.

Due to the use of Whitelaw as part of our address Val and I are often asked "Where is Whitelaw"?

The small proposed town and district of Whitelaw was so named after a Government Surveyor with the surname Whitelaw. In 1891 the Rail line to Korumburra was opened as was a station at Whitelaw.

The Whitelaw Station closed circa 1963 and all of its infrastructure removed. Whitelaw was first surveyed with a small area of housing allotments included but they were never developed, a store was built and opened on Old Bena Road, now named Whitelaw Road near to the intersection with what is now known as the Bena – Korumburra Road. With opening of the coal mines at Korumburra the area never developed as a town, the store failed and very little appeared other than dairy farming and grazing properties. However the name Whitelaw remained as a district that covered those properties off Old Bena Road now Whitelaw Road, Sullivans Road and the western end of Bena – Korumburra Road.

During my early teenage years being the early 1960's I lived in Station Street Korumburra near to the railway station. Of course the western side of the Korumburra township was far less developed than what can be seen now. Of particular note was the alignment of the South Gippsland Highway between Korumburra and the small town of Bena. After passing west along the north side of the Victoria Hotel (known as the bottom pub and now a petrol station site) the highway which was also aligned along Commercial Street then took an uphill turn onto Warragul Road and onto what is known as the reservoir hill. At a point opposite Charles Street and the eastern side of the Show Grounds there was a railway crossing on Warragul Road below the butter factory, it was controlled by a wigwag that had a swinging red light and a very loud alarm that warned of any oncoming train that was about to cross the

road, now the site of the rail trail crossing.

The South Gippsland Highway turned west onto the Bena – Korumburra Road at the top of the reservoir hill, also the site of the Strezelecki Monument, then ran down and through the township of Bena. While the rail line had an almost direct line between Korumburra and Bena.

A short road continued from Charles Street west past the Show Grounds and discontinued at the site of the cattle and pig Sale Yards then situated on the western side of the Show Grounds, now part of the industrial estate. On the south side of the rail line there was a siding that provided loading facilities for cattle and pigs that had been purchased at the Sale Yards and were then sent by rail to Dandenong and various meat processing establishments. Sale day for cattle was on a Friday.

The rail line then continued west and at a point of approximately 2.5 kilometres from Korumburra where it passed over Old Bena Road, now known as Whitelaw Road and often referred to as the back road, it then continued north to the then highway and what is now the Bena – Korumburra Road.

Whitelaw as a district is defined by the now Whitelaw Road being the first local road on the west side of Korumburra, where it once crossed the rail line. The Whitelaw crossing had a pair of large wooden gates one each side of the rail line and had red glass kerosene lamps on them at night, they remained closed to traffic. A Railway house which was last occupied by Mr and Mrs Bob Barnes who were employed by the Victorian Railways to operate the gates, Mrs Barnes did so during the day while Mr Barnes worked on other aspects of Vic Rail. Should a vehicle driver wanting to cross the train line and travel to or from the Highway, the driver would toot the car horn for Mr or Mrs Barnes to come down the long steps from the house and open the gates. Should a train be close to passing through the crossing then one would then just have to wait

for the gate operator to arrive after the train had passed by. Tooting of the car horn after 10.00 pm, especially on a winter's night was definitely not welcomed by the gate operators. When the Victorian Country Roads Board or CRB realigned the South Gippsland Highway also in the early 1960's it then ran as it does now, along the south side of the rail line from the then Sale Yards, now the industrial estate, to Bena. The Whitelaw rail crossing was closed and evidence of the crossing, house and platform passed into history.

In 1970 my wife Val and I married and from then on resided on Sullivans Road Whitelaw where we raised our four children and have remained for 54 years. The district of Whitelaw is delineated on maps by the properties along Whitelaw Road, Sullivans Road and the Western end of Bena – Korumburra Road. Whitelaw district has what is considered to be its central point at the now Highway intersection with Whitelaw Road, on a crest only some 50 metres from the rail trail and the site of the once Whitelaw Gates rail crossing.

The last remaining iconic item at Whitelaw is "One Tree Hill," visible on the sky line west of Korumburra as a single pine tree growing on the crest of a high hill 2 s from the start of Sullivans Road. There were other features that have now gone, such as the tennis courts on the Bena – Korumburra Road, the copper telephone lines that were attached by glass insulators to the trunks of the last stand of massive blue gums that are still standing along the road sides at the start of Sullivans Road.

Our generation remembers Whitelaw as a comparatively small district being predominately comprised of dairy farms and grazing properties and we remember especially the people now gone before us who owned them. People such as Mr Jack Sullivan a 1st WW veteran who once owned the last property on Sullivans Road for whom the road is now named. At the end of this road is to be found the panoramic views

to Korumburra and south over the coastal flat lands to Inverloch, Wonthaggi and the waters of Bass Strait. One may also on a clear day, look south east to the far distant Wilsons Promontory Mountain tops. We also recall Val's parents telling us stories of Mr Edwards, the tea merchant with the slogan "There is only one T in Australia" he owned several properties at Whitelaw. Along with the other owners and custodians of Whitelaw properties who, through the years of horse and dray, economic depression and two world wars, held fast to the district of Whitelaw. It was they who over a considerable period made their living under often harsh conditions, raised their families and contributed to local and regional development. All the while, passing through the Whitelaw Gates to access the highway or the passenger train, or maybe travel into Korumburra for the price of one penny. That which was Whitelaw, its limited infrastructure and peoples of well over more than half of the twentieth century have gone, but remain within the memories of those long-term residents who are encouraged to record their history of living within the district of Whitelaw. Compiled by Dennis Conn for the interest of the Korumburra Historical Society and the members who are assisting with the further development of the rail trail through markers that will inform users of historical aspects of the rail trail. 2025.

A Poowong Dairy Farm

Australasian (Melbourne)

Saturday 18th. August 1888 page 19

After the able articles by "Selector" in which, from its geological and climatic conditions, he argues such a bright future for this part of Gippsland, I thought it might not be uninteresting to have a look over one of our principal dairy farms, and see what practical confirmation there was of conclusions arrived at from scientific data. With this object in view, I paid a visit to "The Priory," a dairy farm owned by Messrs. Scott and Son, consisting of 640 acres of cleared land near Poowong. Half of the property was a selection taken up by Mr. R.G. Scott some years ago, and on part of it was grown, I believe, the first blade of grass raised in the district.

From this selection spread the great area of settlement to the eastward, for which also it was the centre of and basis of operations in the early days. With such a record it is only fitting that the owners should lead the way to higher things in the shape of systematic and scientific dairying. At the time of my visit there were over 200 head of cattle on the place, besides some brood mares and young stock; a few sheep are also kept for killing. The milking herd does not consist of any particular breed or breeds – in fact, the strain preferred is a cross between the Ayrshire and the milking strain of the shorthorn. Two prize shorthorn bulls, purchased at the last National Show, are kept on the place. All the cows I saw were large framed, likely looking milkers; they are not housed at night, but are fed twice a day with green stuff, oats, peas, vetches, and barley being grown for the purpose. A little hay also is sometimes used, but it is intended to use ensilage next year. The cattle are fed during the months of July and August only, so that a large supply of fodder is not required, as the milkers are then reduced to about 60 head. No feeding is necessary during the autumn months, as there is then ample grass for all requirements.

The maximum number milked in the summer was 180 head, and the output of cheese a ton and a half a week. The plant provides for making either butter or cheese, and butter is at present being made; this is owing in the first place, to the tempting price of the latter commodity; and in the next to the difficulty of carting the relatively

heavier production of cheese to the station. It takes three horses all their time to take 12 cwt. over to Drouin in a day at present. The return journey occupies another day, so that it will be easily seen most of the profit would be absorbed in the cartage alone of the heavier, or rather bulkier productions. This state of things will soon be altered though as another nine months should see the Great Southern line completed.

Operations are carried on in a building about 50ft. x 60ft. in dimensions; outside of this is the boiler in which is generated the steam required for the many purposes of the factory, and, among others, the driving of a 6 h.p. engine. Inside there is very little evidence to the eye of an old-time dairyman as to what business is carried on there. In the middle of the place he will see an immense vat, big enough to brew beer for a regiment of soldiers. In one corner stands an engine, while the ceiling is garnished with shafting and pulleys. Near at hand stands that latest boon conferred by science on industry – a De Laval separator, alongside of it is a churn capable of churning 160 lb. of butter at a time. But at first glance no dairyman of the old school would take it to be a churn. It is simply a large box, about 2 and a half feet square and 3 and a half feet long, on a stand. This kind is largely used in New South Wales, and gives great satisfaction. There are no dashers or anything whatever inside of it, yet the butter comes in from 15 to 20 minutes. It has a square lid, with a little glass skylight in the centre of it. When the churn commences to revolve the glass becomes dim, but as soon as the butter comes the glass clears, so the operator knows what is going on inside without taking off the lid. The engine does all the driving work, even to turning the separator.

The dairy itself is close at hand, and is kept at the right temperature by means of pipes supplied with steam from the boiler on site. By this means also the cream is matured, if required, more quickly than it would be if left to the natural temperature. As the cream comes from the separator it is put into large coolers as it is at a comparatively high temperature when it

History News

comes from the machine, then it is stored in vats till required for churning. The milk as it comes from the separator is run into the great vat in the centre for the calves. Some people say this milk is no good for calves, but they seem to do very well on it here. A Cherry's butter worker is used to mix the butter, and it is then printed in half pound pats, and is fit for market. Its quality may be guessed from the fact that butter from this dairy realises the highest market price. The output of butter in the autumn was 700 lb. per week. In the spring and summer months the yield of milk was 500 gal. a day. This could have been very largely increased if desired, so there was then abundance of grass – sufficient, indeed, to carry 50 head more of cattle. It is the great advantage of Gippsland to have plenty of feed till late in the autumn; the end of the summer when the grass is gone elsewhere is our best time. But feed must be green to carry such stock during the months of July and August – our worst time.

This is done here, but not so largely as might be. A large quantity of potatoes is grown, and also beans; of the latter, a small lot yielded nearly 100 bushels to the acre. Pigs, of course, are an important line on the place, and from 80 to 100 are turned off every year, most of them fat. It is intended to cultivate more extensively next year, and go in more largely for pigs. The calves are kept till they are from three to six months old; in cheese making time they are fed on whey, mixed with a little pollard or inferior flour; at other times they get the separator milk. They are not much of course, but they do very well once they take to the grass. The selectors buy them for one pound or thirty shillings a head. This is better than knocking them on the head, as they have to do in some dairies.

The labour employed in the summer is generally about ten hands; besides this, two or three members of the family are always employed supervising or doing the more important work. As no skilled labour need be employed, the average wage is about one pound per man; their living would be less than 10 shillings each, so that we have a cost of fifteen pounds per week for labour. At this time a ton and a half of cheese week was being made; 6 pence per pound was obtained for most of it, but average it at 5 pence a pound all round, and we get a very tidy profit balance. This was, of course, the best time of year – but keep the working staff up to all strength all the year round,

and reduce the output to a ton per week, which is quite within the capabilities of the dairy, and we still have a big cheque every week. There are many other working expenses of course, but pigs and calves far more than cover them.

In conclusion, I may say that, judging from the quantity of stock of one sort and another that this place carries, and from the crops off

the small acres cultivated, and also from the profits of the concern, "Selector's" theories as to the future of this part of Gippsland are fully borne out, and industry and capital have here at least made good the prophecies of science. But capital is a sine qua non; without it the treasures of Gippsland will only be slowly developed, and with it every selection is a fortune.



The Korumburra & District Historical Society
is excited to announce its new project:

Great Southern Rail Trail - A Ticket to History

Using a mix of traditional signage and web-based content
we are developing a 'hop on-hop off' historical overlay
that will stretch from Nyora to east of Kardella.

The history of our area will be brought to life as you walk the trail
– you will just need to bring your phone!

~ This pilot project is being developed in collaboration with the South Gippsland Shire Council ~

Book Review

by Marion Shuttleworth

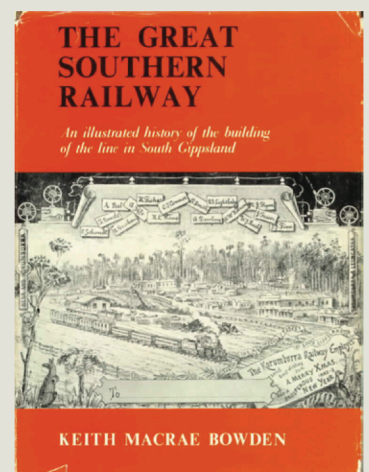
The Great Southern Railway Bowden, Keith 1970 (130 pages)

In this book Keith Bowden clearly lays out the story of the construction of Great Southern Railway in the years 1887-1892. He explores this in the context of the wider history of South Gippsland.

While detailed, this is an easy-to-read book with many interesting illustrations that capture the challenges of building the line.

This is a highly recommended, accessible book giving an overview of the building of the railway.

The library has several copies available to borrow.



Rail Trail Walking Track Proposed by Bob Newton

I would like to submit this report on the proposed, rail trail walking track from Korumburra to Jumbunna, if I am successful, who knows where it will lead to in the future, I decided to try and establish a safe walking track, because this Road is very narrow in places for cyclists and walkers, as most people are aware there is a good walking path from the Korumburra railway station area to the Secondary College. I propose that the walking track would go through the school at this point, and connect up to the old Jumbunna railway line behind the school, which runs through the school grounds, if all goes well, this may change, The School is proposing to have an internal running track inside the school grounds, from the school the rail trail would cross the Korumburra—Wonthaggi Road, at this point, I am having a meeting with Vic Roads to obtain permission to cross the Road, from here the trail will travel on an existing section of old Road, (gravel Depot), then enter the bush section that Land Care revegetated in 1999, no trees would be destroyed, this area is still owned by Vic Roads, it goes to Colin Dowel's property (Stockyards), it would go through Dowel's family property also with their kind permission, it would then go through the Lomagno family's property, with their kind permission, incidently there is an easement occupied by Aqua Sure, that runs where the rail track was formerly.

Bookshop

The following books are currently available for purchase from the Historical Society by contacting the Secretary by email: 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 2025 to 30th September 2026

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 2025-26 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 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

For queries: Facebook: www.facebook.com/korumburrahistory

Email: treasurer@korumburrahistory.com.au