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*Leeton Family & Local
History Society Inc*

Newsletter

May - June 2020



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO THE ROXY – 90 YEARS OLD

LEETON FAMILY & LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY Inc

MEETINGS HELD:

Third Thursday of each month – 10.30am (No Meeting- January)

WHERE: WC&IC Leeton Museum & Art Gallery

MEMBERSHIP: Single \$15.00
Family \$20.00

OFFICE BEARERS:

Chairperson: Tony Reneker
Vice President: Peter Middleton
Secretary: Lyn Middleton
Treasurer: Karleen Reilly
Librarian: Lyn Middleton
Research Officer: Wendy Senti
Publicity/Newsletter: Tony Reneker

LF&LH SOCIETY ROOM WC&IC Leeton Museum & Art Gallery
OPENING TIMES: deferred

RESEARCH ENQUIRIES:

A minimum charge of \$20 for each enquiry.
The Newsletter is produced yearly in June – cost \$2 each.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES:

To Promote Family & Local History Research
To purchase materials to assist our members to trace their family trees.
To collect early records, photographs and information of Leeton Shire (and the surrounding irrigation area).
To assist in educating the public of the importance of preservation of early history.

ATTENTION:

Articles appearing in this Newsletter MUST NOT BE REPRODUCED without the written permission from the Leeton Family & Local History Society Inc.

DISCLAIMER:

LEETON FAMILY & LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY INC ACCEPTS NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INFORMATION PROVIDED OR THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER.

FOR SALE:

Leeton Farm Registers Microfiche – P O A
Irrigation Recorder Film – P O A
Index to BDM's - (extracted from Murrumbidgee Irrigator)
1915-1950 \$32.50 includes post & handling
1951-1975 \$37.50 includes post & handling
1976-1999 \$34.50 includes post & handling
All three Indexes posted together \$90.
Applications for Employment W C & I C 1911-1922 \$10 + P & H
Leeton-Whitton Cemetery Transcriptions & Burial Records 1913-2000 \$30 + P & H
Henry Lawson in Leeton - Out of Print
Leeton 100 Years – Thanks for the Memories. (2013) \$35 + P & H
A Brief History of Leeton (1968) by AE Bowmaker on searchable CD (2018)
\$20 + \$3 P&H
Leeton Lads of First World War (2018) \$10 + \$5 P & H
Celebrating 50 years of Leeton's Festivals & SunRice Ambassador Entrants 1970-2020 (2020)
\$15 + \$5 P&H
Past Yearly calendars \$2 plus P&H

ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO POST OFFICE BOX 475 LEETON NSW 2705

Email: leetonfamilyandlocalhistory@gmail.com Web: leetonfamilyandlocalhistory.com.au.

Find us on 

We acknowledge our logo has been adapted from © design by Don Graham

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COVID-19

While the Leeton Shire at this stage (9 April 2020) has no reported cases of COVID-19, it is still impacting both financially and socially right across the shire. The Leeton Family and Local History Society Inc (LFLHS) has also been affected, albeit in only minor ways. Monthly meetings have been cancelled for the months of April, May and June 2020 at this stage, with the possibility of further cancellations, depending on Australian Government advice.

It has also meant that our move to our new home at the Water Commission & Irrigation Commission (WCIC) has been temporarily suspended. Volunteers have been busily packing boxes and emptying drawers from the old library office and moving them into our new premises. Unfortunately, this has come to a grinding halt, but at least some documents have been moved to a safer storage area!



Members Wendy Senti and Lyn Middleton start the sorting in our new premises.
 Good luck with that ladies!
 Photo courtesy of Tony Reneker

LEETON’S ROXY COMMUNITY THEATRE
 TURNS 90!

On the 7 April 2020, Leeton’s Roxy Community Theatre turned 90. Leeton resident, Margaret Sands, who is the author of the book “Up in Lights, 80 Years of Leeton’s Roxy Community Theatre”, published in 2010, had these great words to say about her dear friend, the Roxy.

“Today, we acknowledge the 90th Birthday of Leeton’s ROXY Community Theatre. The theatre opened on the 7th April, 1930, being the second ROXY in Australia, preceded only 2 months earlier, by the Parramatta ROXY Theatre which opened on the 6th February, 1930. The Gala opening night of Leeton’s ROXY was a grand occasion with a capacity audience. Patrons to the theatre paid admission prices of Lounge 3/6, Dress Circle 2/- & 1/-, to view “The Black Watch”, a runtime of 93 minutes with a sound mix of Mono (Movietone). Starring Myrna Loy and Victor McLaglen. This movie screened for the following four nights at the Leeton ROXY, accompanied by “Amazing Short Talkie Subjects” including Mickey Mouse! The Leeton ROXY, a renowned Kaberry & Chard icon, was built in the pioneering days of our town, between two world wars, and has bestowed motivation to many generations. With community pride, Leeton’s ROXY continues to dominate the main intersection of our town in illuminated majesty, and with most of the original architectural features and embellishment intact. This can only be said to be a triumph! Appreciation is extended to those who have dedicated their time and expertise, made generous donation or simply ‘shared the ROXY passion’. Your endeavour has carried us to this day! Happy Birthday to our beloved ROXY...’Long May She Reign’ ... and in her Heritage Originality!”



The Old Roxy Theatre
 Photo courtesy Margaret Sands

2020 Leeton SunRice Festival – another victim of COVID-19 Pandemic

Australian Government restrictions has meant the 2020 SunRice Festival has had to be cancelled. While disappointing for the Leeton Shire, it is the right thing to do, as people's health and safety override everything.

To celebrate the 50 years of festivals, the LFLHS received a grant from SunRice Australia and as a result, published a book entitled "Celebrating 50 Years of Leeton's Festivals and SunRice Ambassador Entrants 1970-2020".

As the title suggests, the book has photos and stories of the past 50 years of festivals in Leeton and is fascinating reading. While research into the book was a real team effort, the real leaders in this project were committee members Wendy Senti and Jeanette Petts.

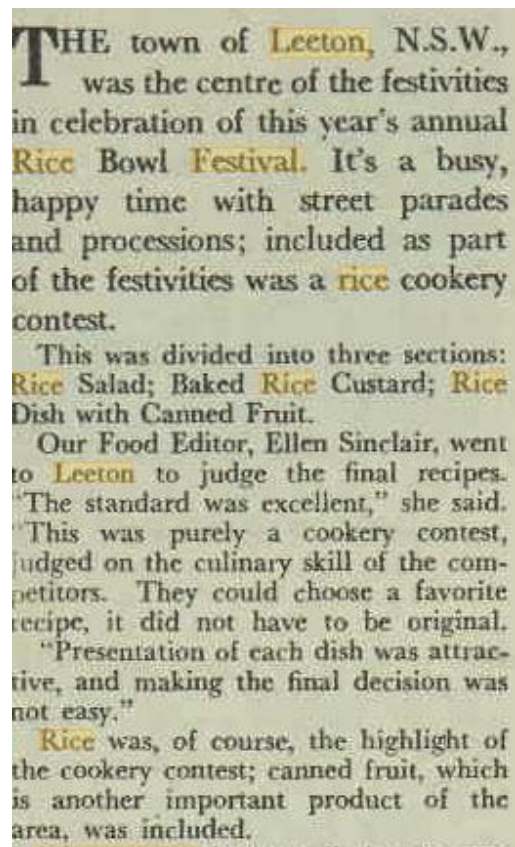
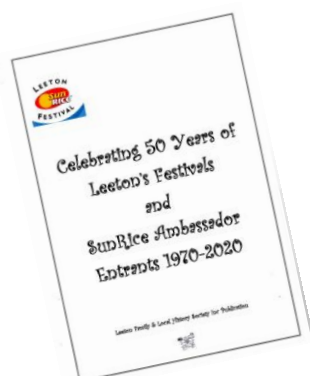
John Knight was the director of the very first Rice Bowl Festival in 1970, and he agreed to write a forward to the book which included these words:

"One purpose of our life is to leave our communities a better place than we find. The record of the Leeton commitment to its festivities is totally amazing.

Leeton's previous Rice Bowl Festivals - now the SunRice Festival continues to be one of Australia's 'Truly Family Festivals' and ranks among the very best.

As director of the inaugural Rice Bowl Festival, I was thrilled to read through the Leeton Family and Local History Societies Inc. publication. I would recommend it receive total support from the Leeton Community, who should be so proud of the Societies achievements."

Orders for the books are now being taken and represent great value at \$15 each plus \$5 postage.



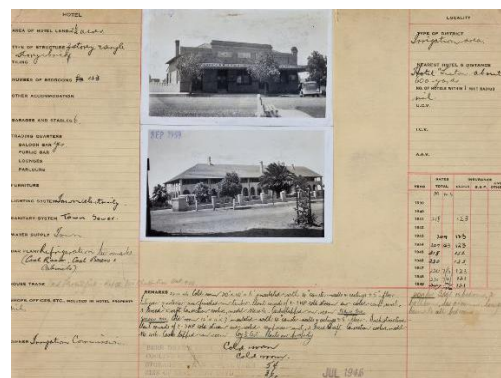
The Australian Woman's Weekly 6 May 1970
Source: Trove

Guest Speakers at Monthly Meetings

The initiative of guest speakers has continued this year and has added interest and entertainment to our meetings.

May - Geoff Burch, President of Wagga Wagga & District Historical Society, was mentioned in our last newsletter.

Our Research Officer has since been online searching for information on our Hotels in their earlier years. Finding who the licensees were, photos of the buildings in the 1920's, 30's & 40's and so on as well as improvements to the buildings, and the amount of beer sold on a monthly basis. This has added to our collection of early histories and photos.



Hydro Hotel Card Index showing information that can be found

Other information can be gained from NSW Land Register Services, also the Cobb & Co Routes & Mail Routes – this latter Website gave us names of contractors of the early mail routes in the area:

Included in this information is the distance of the routes, the number of horses used and the type of sulky, cart, coach or buggies used for each mail run. In some cases the carrying of passengers was allowed.

Peter Leitch – Yanko – Brobenah 18 mile twice a week, contract terminated 1900.

Joseph Byrnes – Lake Cargelligo to Whitton via Mt Elliott, Ranking Springs 123 miles twice a week until contract terminated 1900.

Andrew McInnes – Whitton, Mt Ida, Curlew Park, The Cliffs, Wendouree, Verandah Rock, to Clifton and return 120 miles twice a week until 1901.

Robert J Black – Whitton, Darlington Point, Kooba Station, Tubbo Station, Warrangesda 30 miles twice a week until 1900.

Thomas McGrath – McKinnons Corner, Pleasant Valley, North Gogelderie to Binya 35 miles twice a week until 1900.

James Slattery – Whitton to Merool (sic) Creek on Whitton Lake Cudgellico mail line 19 miles twice a week until 1902.

June – Lyn Brown of Leeton gave an account of her father Spencer John Penberthy (known as Jack) who was, during WW2, a Sergeant at the Yanco Prisoner of War Camp No 15 in 1943.



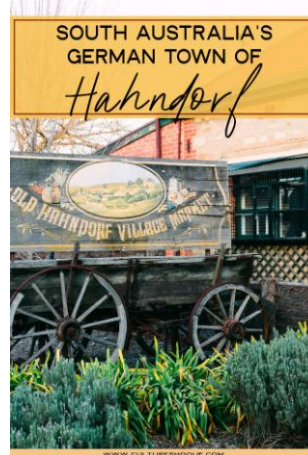
Photograph of Sergeant Spencer John Penberthy
Yanco Prisoner of War Camp No 15 1943
Photo courtesy of Lyn Brown (daughter)

July – Tony Reneker of Leeton detailed the Hydro Tavern Leeton arson which occurred on 16 July 2011.



Photograph of Hydro Tavern Leeton ablaze 16 July 2011
Photo courtesy of Tony Reneker

August – Wayne Kook of Leeton told the fascinating story of his family history and their involvement in the foundation of the township of Hahndorf, South Australia.



Hahndorf South Australia – the town which was helped founded by the Kook family

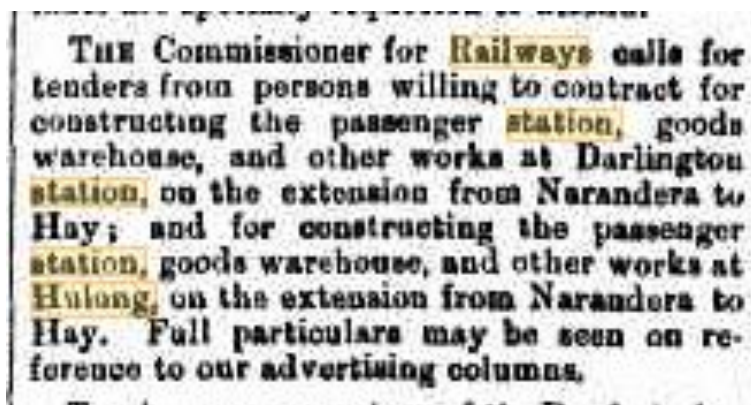
Photo courtesy of cultureshoque.com

FIRST FAMILIES			
Head of family	Occupation	Place of origin in Prussia	Ship to SA
OFFICIALS:			
KAVEL August	pastor	Kiernitz	Prince George
KAVEL Friedrich	schoolteacher	Kiernitz	Prince George
KOOK Hermann	farm supervisor & surveyor	Luebeck	Zebra
FAMILIES:			
BARTEL Christian	thresher-gardener	Moestchen	Zebra
BARTEL Gottlob	cottager	Moestchen	Zebra
BARTSCH Samuel	joiner	Skampe	Zebra
BEHREND Gottfried	shoemaker	Schwibus	Zebra
BOEHM George	carpenter	Muestchen	Zebra
BRAETTING Samuel		Brasitz	Zebra
DOHNT Gottfried	tenant farmer	Guhren	Zebra
FUEGERT Gottlob		Scharfenwald-Hauland	Zebra
HARTMANN George	gardener	Salkau	Prince George
HELBIG Beonore	widow	Friedrichsdelle	Zebra
HOFFMANN Gottfried	thresher-gardener	Krummendorf	Prince George
JABNSCH Christian	farmer	Kay	Zebra
JAESCHKE Erdmann	agricultural labourer	Kiernitz	Prince George
JAESCHKE George	church elder	Scharfenwald-Hauland	Catharina
JAHETZKI George	mason	Muestchen	Zebra
KALLESKI George	merchant & miller	Tischlegel	Prince George
KLUUGE Beonore	widow	Langhelmsdorf	Zebra
KUCHEL George	night-watchman & wine-dresser	Langmeil	Prince George
KUCHEL Samuel	wine-dresser	Langmeil	Prince George
LANGE Gottlieb			Catharina
LIEBELT Christian	shepherd	Nickern	Zebra
LIEBELT Christoph	shepherd	Schoenborn	Prince George
LIEBELT Gottfried	tailor	Schoenborn	Prince George

Display plaque showing Herman Kooks name as one of the officials.
He was a surveyor and farm supervisor.

September – Margaret Strong informed the meeting of the history of the South-West Railway in NSW from 1892 to 1992.

She supplied maps and photos for all to see the progress made over the ninety years.



Article from Wagga Wagga Advertiser 14 July 1881
Courtesy: Trove

Oral Histories

The LF&LHS are continuing with their Oral History program involving local residents. This story is as a result of one of those recordings.

The Barellan Plane Crash

The two young Barellan boys could not believe their eyes as they watched the Gypsy Moth plane with a pilot and passenger on board, make its landing at the Barellan Showground. A plane landing at Barellan was a rarity and the excited boys had run all the way from where they lived in Myall Street to witness it. The 12th day of August 1943 was a hot, dry and dusty late autumn day, and the landing created a swirling mass of dust, dirt and grass before the single propeller of the plane came to a standstill. Two figures emerged from the dust, the pilot and owner of the Plane, Mr Wallace Stillard, and his passenger Major R.C. Ballantyne, who was on leave from the Fighting Forces. The Major had political aspirations, and was running as an Independent Candidate for the seat of Riverina in the upcoming Federal Election. He was in Barellan, which was part of the Riverina Electorate in those days, to try to win some votes.

The men saw the two wide eyed boys and asked casually if they would mind looking after the plane while they made their way to the Barellan village. 11-year-old Kevin "Tige" Dicker and 9-year-old Owen Lyons, fervently nodded their consent and as soon as the two men were out of sight, raced to the plane and jumped in. Re-enacting every Biggle's Adventure they had ever read, the two boys pushed and pulled every button and lever on the plane as they pretended to fight off enemy planes high over the English Channel.

The two hours the men were away before they returned only seemed like five minutes, but the Major had another appointment in Wagga Wagga to attend and from the safety of outside the fence of the trotting track, the two boys

watched in awe as the pilot started the engine. Soon it was taking off to the north in the same manner in which it arrived, all chaos, noise and dust. The Gypsy Moth however, struggled to obtain lift and thrust and to the horror of both the boys and the pilot, it became obvious the plane would collide with the numerous box trees which ringed the northern end of the showground.

In a desperate move, the pilot banked sharply to the left, with the idea of flying over the pavilions which lay to the west. The turn though was too sharp and his left wing collided with one of the several horse hurdles that were in place on the showground. The plane somersaulted and crashed to the ground with a tremendous roar. It remained upside down with its human cargo trapped inside and with petrol pouring from its fuselage. The two boys were the only witnesses to the accident and acting on instinct, ran directly to the crash site. A simple single spark could well cause an explosion that would ignite the plane and mean certain death to its occupants, and possibly the two boys as well.

The boy's minds raced as they feared their playing in the plane had been the cause of the accident. Despite their tender age, they were adept at hunting and skinning animals and in fact Tige was a Barellan Boy scout who just happened to be carrying his scout issued knife. With adept hands, he cut through the calico fabric side of the plane and Mr Stillard fell from the plane to the ground freed from his entrapment. Once freed, Mr Stillard went to the aid of the Major who was suffering a cut to his face and released him as well.

Owen and Tige – what did they do? Like any nine and eleven-year-old boys who thought they had done something wrong, they ran for their lives! Newspaper reports at the time ran the story of the crashed plane but no mention was ever made of the heroic rescue efforts of Owen and Tige. The boys, fearing they were still to blame for the accident, kept their story a secret for years and as they grew up, the secret remained between them. In fact, neither man even told their respective wives of the incident until much later in life. It wasn't until the 1990's that the story was told for the first time in a local Barellan bulletin. Then, earlier this year, the story re-emerged when both men took part in the Leeton Family and Local Historical Society Oral History program.

Had this happened in 2019, the rescue of the two men by the two Barellan boys would have created a storm on social media and they would have probably received national acclaim. Neither man consider that they did anything special on that day, 76 years ago next month. Tige, is a resident of the Alf Hermann Lodge while his wife Nancy still resides in Leeton after moving here from Barellan about 12 years ago. Owen moved to Leeton with his wife Elizabeth about 63 years ago but still calls Barellan home. Both were a little reluctant to talk about the incident and played down the fact that they should be considered heroes. Both agreed they felt lucky at the time they did not get into any trouble, but more importantly that no one was seriously injured. So, what became of the plane? Suffering extensive damage, it was moved by the local carrier Norm Hands to a shed owned by the Barellan Petrol Agent, Mr Levy. The shed was situated opposite the Barellan silos next to what was then Fred Donaghey's shop. The wreck was sold months

The Whitton Punt

later by Mr Stillard to a Mr H.B. (Bert) Mark of North Deniliquin. Mr Mark oversaw its painstaking rebuild and it was spotted two years later flying high in the skies above Deniliquin.

Mr Stillard was not quite as lucky. He had purchased a Percival Petral Q.6 and at about 11am on 4th July 1947 left Sydney Airport bound for Geelong in the plane. He was not heard of again until about 12 months later when the wreck, containing the skeleton of Mr Stillard, and his passenger John Meehan, was located near Wee Jasper.

As for Major Ballantyne, he suffered a resounding defeat at the Federal Election in 1942, polling only 2992 votes which paled into insignificance behind the sitting Labour Member, Mr J.C. Langtry who polled over 25000. Newspaper reports were quite ignominious in describing that the Major would have to forfeit his deposit for polling less than a fifth of the leading primary votes.

Story courtesy of Tony Reneker. Copyright Leeton Family & Local History Society Inc

PLANE CRASH AT BARELLAN

Major R. C. Ballantyne, who contested Riverina as an Independent, narrowly escaped serious injury recently, when the Gypsy Moth plane he had been using in his election campaign crashed at Barellan.

Major Ballantyne suffered a cut on the nose and the pilot (W. Stillard) received slight injuries to the forehead.

The plane was taking off for Wagga when the engine stalled. Owing to a tree being directly in front, the pilot was forced to bank the machine, which lost height, nose dived into the ground, nose dived and somersaulted.

Major Ballantyne continued his trip to Wagga by train.

Article from Wagga Wagga Advertiser 15 August 1943
Courtesy: Trove



Photograph of Kevin Dicker and Owen Lyons 2019
Photo courtesy of Tony Reneker



Whitton Punt c1920's LF&LHS Collection

The Whitton Punt was a major crossing over the Murrumbidgee River between Darlington Point/Whitton and Euroley.

Owned jointly by Murrumbidgee Shire Council & Willimbong Shire Council (now Leeton Shire Council) it was used for transport as well as livestock crossing the river from North to South and return.

The Darlington Point Bridge over the Murrumbidgee River was not completed until June 1905 when Mrs A J Cummings the oldest living member of the area officially cut the ribbon to declare the bridge officially open.

In 1938 the punt's use was discussed between the two councils with a proposal to close the crossing, but due to statistics showing the amount of traffic using the punt it was decided to keep it open.

It wasn't until 1949 when white ant damage was discovered when a mob of sheep crossed the punt with part of the timber giving way from the damage caused by the ants.

It was decided not to repair the structure due to costs and with less use it was withdrawn from service.

In 1950 after receiving advice that the punt had sunk, the Department of Local Government officially approved the closing of the punt and river crossing.

Due to the unavailability of access to our rooms due to Covid-19 we thank Leeton Library for their assistance in helping out with the printing of this newsletter.

Social distancing rules were complied with.