



Lakes Log

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The Newsletter of Lakes Entrance Historical Society Inc.

An Afternoon in the Forest

A group of 26 joined the latest Lakes Historical Society outing to Goldsmiths in the Colquhoun Forest to learn about the early settlers and the hardship they endured trying to farm in this harsh environment.

70

Autum 2026

Inside this issue:

<i>State School 2672 is 100!</i>	2
<i>The new class of 1926</i>	3
<i>Moving House</i>	4
<i>The Mystery Album</i>	5
<i>From our library: End of an Era</i>	6
<i>The Guest House Era</i>	7
<i>Funding Finale?</i>	8



Left: Historical Society president Anne Macarthur at Iannuzzi's log cabin.

Image: Judy Jenkins

It was Iannuzzi who built the log cabin, now sorely in need of repair but the one-roomed cabin once had a sealed floor and functioning chimney.



Poignant reminders of failed attempts to tame the forest.

Images: Darilyn Goldsmith

Les Goldsmith's presentation highlighted the hardship those early settlers endured trying to clear and fence the blocks of land to meet the conditions of their leases with the State Government department.

Most had to take on extra work as they slowly realised that the land was totally unsuitable for growing crops.

They were faced with the dilemma of paying the government or having food to eat.

Of particular interest to the Goldsmiths is Lot 119, which they have owned for nearly 40 years.

Prior to it becoming freehold, others who vied for the lease were Richard Travers, who met his end in a Japanese prisoner of war camp during World War 2, and the man who worked out how to make the land pay—Frank Iannuzzi.

The Italian planted vegetables rather than crops of oats and maize and made a reasonable living.



After all this depressing history we ventured out to explore the remaining relics of this time—now largely forgotten in the forest, but first we were treated to a Darilyn style sumptuous afternoon tea.

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State School 2672 is 100!

Not the first school in Lakes Entrance but the only one to have reached this milestone.

The first school started in 1867—Mrs Kelly's private school situated near 'Merrangbaur'—where parents paid 1/- per week for each child's tuition.

On 29 May 1885 official school No.2672 began in a rented hall next to the Fernbank Hotel before a dedicated school was built at Bulmer Street, opening in 1889.



Bulmer Street 1913

This three-roomed timber building became inadequate as the town's population increased. By 1922 the school had 125 students crammed into a building designed for 100.

Land for a new school was purchased and a concrete-walled structure, at a cost of just over £4000, built at the current Myer Street site in 1925.

The 1926 school year commenced with the official opening of the new school by Albert Lind, MLA for Gippsland East, taking place on 25 June.



Myer Street 1926

Mrs Lind cut the ribbon across the entry portal and the children filed into the school. Each student was presented with a special card to mark the occasion.

This fine new school was soon also too small and an additional classroom was added in 1956, with two more rooms being completed in 1966.



Card presented to Doris Allen on 25 June 1926

The Library/Arts block was built in the 1970s, also toilets, a staff room and two more classrooms.

By 1980 there were 360 students and 18 teaching staff, so six house blocks adjoining the school were purchased to ensure the children had sufficient playground space.

In 1992 the school at Kalimna West No.3364 closed and was merged with Lakes Entrance No.2672.



Myer Street 1939



Myer Street 2027

More changes have occurred over the decades, with the advancement of technology and the expectations of the community.

In No.2672's centenary year, the Library block has been demolished and work is underway for a replacement in 2027.

The New Class of 1926

By Marie Fish

In February 1926 Lakes Entrance children, who had been attending the old school on the corner of the Esplanade and Bulmer Street, got to start the year at the new building in Myer Street.

There were also a number of little ones, who commenced their school life on that same day. A few of the names told to me by one of them (my husband Rex Fish) were Oscar Hammarstrom, Gil Roberts, Rex Inglis, Doris Allen and Arthur Fitzclarence.

Doris Allen died not long after that memorable event, but her family kept the souvenir card presented to all the children on that first day.

Oscar Hammarstrom lived with his newly-widowed mother and two older sisters, Addie and Emma.

Their Swedish fisherman father had drowned at the Entrance when his boat overturned during a storm. He and his mate, another Swede Hans Andersen, were thrown into the water, but only Hans made it to shore.

The townspeople banded together to raise money to help the family. Luckily a Melbourne newspaper took up the story and enough was raised to build them a cottage in Roadknight Street.

Rex Fish lived next door to Oscar and they remained good friends their entire lives.

Gillie Roberts was a member of the well-known Roberts family at Lake Tyers.

Rex Inglis was related to the Harbeck family through his mother. He and his brother Roy were electricians, and coincidentally did all the electrical work for Rex Fish when he was a builder in Traralgon after World War II.

Doris Allen was the daughter of Sid Allen, who worked in the fledgling

onshore oil industry at Lakes Entrance. Her mother ran the well-known 'Allen's Tearooms' on Myer Street hill. At that time it was sometimes called Allen's Hill.

Another of Rex's lasting memories of those early school days was of the strict disciplinarian Headmaster, Orville Martin, who had the children marching around and around the playground until they learned to keep in step.

Rex also remembered Oscar getting 'the cuts' every morning when his arithmetic homework was wrong—although Oscar considered the punishment was easier than trying to work out the sums.

These four boys remained friends from their first day at the Myer Street school, with Rex and Gil standing together at Oscar's funeral and Rex Inglis coming to visit him one last time before he died.



Putting names to the faces of 1926—Rex had a go but there are a few ?s. Can you identify any others?

Back Row: ?, Rupert Bills, Arthur

Henderson, ?, ?, ?, Creighton South, Arthur

Fitzclarence, Tommy McNamara, Arthur

Whiter, ?, ?, ?

3rd Row: Johnny Gray, ?, ?, Alice Adams, Olga

Anderson, Barbara McCulloch, Daisy Mason,

Pat or Vera Field, Peggy Staughton, Joan

Williams, ?, Eva Sutherland, ?, Gillie Roberts

2nd Row: Basil Mitchelson, Wally Andrews,

Oscar Hammarstrom, Lil Allen, ?, Gwen

Harbeck, Frances Harbeck, Monica Burke,

Gwenda Sutherland, Dianne Kreymborg,

Lorna Kreymborg, ?, Billy Roadknight, Dave

Bills

Front Row: ?, Fred Henning, Arthur Whiter,

Alfie Rawlings, Owen Cadday, ?, Frankie

McNamara, Rex Fish, Jack Gray, ?

Moving House

By Wendy Price

Who knew that the manager's house at *Lakes Beachfront Holiday Retreat once occupied pride of place on the Esplanade at Lakes Entrance?

In the late 1960s/early 1970s, when Alex and Bess Larkins were living in Gully Road at Lake Tyers, they planned to establish a caravan park at 430 Lake Tyers Beach Road.

That would require a high tank to be installed to draw water from a bore to supply the visitors' needs.

Alex saw an advertisement for a suitable tank in Lakes Entrance and went to inspect it. He returned home with the news that he had bought the tank—and also bought two maisonettes, which he assured Bess would make them a comfortable home.

**Note: Lakes Beachfront Holiday Retreat was formerly known as the Ninety Mile Beach Caravan Park.*

many trees along Lake Tyers Beach Road. While the trees were trimmed to ensure the road was wide enough, there was nothing they could do about the bridge.

Lester Cox was employed to carry out the removal. He made careful measurements of the building and the bridge before deciding that the only solution was to cut the building into two loads. This was done and the move was successful.



These maisonettes (a popular term in the 1930s to describe self-contained units that formed one building with a shared internal dividing wall) were near the corner of Esplanade and Myer Street, next to the old service station.

The job of moving the building to Lake Tyers Beach brought some problems. At that time the bridge across Bunga Creek on the Princes Highway was a wooden structure—and narrower than its later replacement.

The curve in the road approaching the bridge also posed a challenge, as did the

The Esplanade maisonettes made a comfortable residence for the managers of the Lakes Beachfront Holiday Resort.

1983 Image: Wendy Price

The two halves were rejoined on their new site and a connecting doorway was installed through what had been the common wall.

The internal walls, which had been painted in a variety of colours, were repainted in the same tones to create a sense of unification.

Source: Bess Larkins 2013

Another anniversary coming up—starting out as the Tambo Shire Historical Society, this group was formed in 1977, so next year will be a BIG one, as we celebrate 50 years.

Persistence and patience pays off, as Jenny Mays returns a precious memory to an Orbost family.

The Mystery Album

Earlier this year Colin Stone gave the Historical Society an old photo album full of family photographs.

He had found it in his garage and had no idea who it belonged to or who the people in the photographs were. And he didn't want it back

Assuming it may have been an East Gippsland family, I uploaded several photos to local history social media sites. Quite a few comments were made over the next few weeks but no-one was identified.

It was presented at our meeting for discussion and the general consensus was to 'bin' the album.

Instead it was decided to give social media one more try, so I posted to the Gippsland History Facebook site, where all comments are scrutinised before being published.

Within a day or so I had a private message from the administrator Linda Barraclough. She had received a comment from someone who believed the album had been stolen from her family! Linda did not publish the comment and forwarded it to me for consideration.



The Mystery Album is reunited with the Orbost family, who have no idea how it finished up in a stranger's garage in Lakes Entrance.

I contacted the person and explained how we had come by the album—she had no idea how it ended up where it did, but her aunt, who lived in Orbost, would call in and collect it.

When the aunt came it was lovely to see how happy it made her, seeing the photos of herself as a small child along with her brother and sisters, mostly taken in the 1950s.

She also had no idea how the album had been lost but was most grateful for its return.

Another mystery solved!



Who knows when this mystery photo: was taken? Was it the late 1980s? Maybe earlier?

From our Library ... Reviewed by Gary Burnett

The End of an Era:

By Lynda Mitchelson-Twigg

In 1854, Thomas Chapman (an employee on a squatting run) and Charles Marshall (a former soldier who had served in India) met at Port Albert and planned to locate and investigate the natural entrance to the Gippsland Lakes and test navigability from Bass Strait.

After an arduous journey in a small open sailboat, they eventually found the entrance and struggled to get their boat across the sandbar. They then entered the sheltered quiet waters of the lakes and discovered large numbers of aborigines from Sale camping on the shores, using canoes made from bark to move around and catch fish.

With the discovery of gold at Livingstone Creek, just north of Omeo, the need for supplies of food by the gold miners influenced Chinese immigrants to set up vegetable growing and fishing activities at Metung—at what is now known as Chinaman's Creek, in the 1870s.

In February 1878, John Vavasour was the first to take out an official fishing licence in the Parish of Colquhoun to operate fishing activities from Toonalook (now Paynesville). Many others soon followed to set up generations of fishing families in the Gippsland Lakes.

And so the 'Era of Licensed Lakes Fishing' began...

For 150 years these intrepid Gippsland fisheries workers and their families, supplied local, Melbourne and Sydney fish markets with fresh seafood. That is, until 31 March 2020, when the last commercial lakes fishing licences were compulsorily acquired by the Victorian Government and commercial activities had to cease.

'Fearful that this important history might be forgotten, a project team was formed in the lead-up to the closure, to document and present the social-

cultural history of the last ten Gippsland Lakes fishing families, their journey and stories, their connection to the land and the sea, their contributions to fishing communities and the Australian fishing industry as a whole.'

This book, 'The End of An Era', presents a beautiful photographic and oral history collection of the last ten commercial fishermen of the Gippsland Lakes, brought together by Lynda Mitchelson-Twigg, representing the Gippsland Lakes Commercial Fishing Community.

Its purpose is to provide a permanent historical record of an original Australian small-scale commercial fishery, to acknowledge the importance of the fishermen's legacy and increase public understanding of the important contribution this industry has made to Australia's food supply.

We may well recognise some of the names mentioned, but more than this, we are privileged to gain an insight into the personal reflections, the emotional connection to the water and some of the special moments that one has to be there to fully appreciate.

It was not an easy way to earn a living, but we are given an insight into what drives these intrepid 'men of the sea'.

We are also made aware of the gradual changes occurring because of the artificial entrance project, not foreseen nor contemplated by the original designers and engineers, but definitely observed through the eyes and efforts of the Lakes fishermen.

These people were conservationist in their overall attitude and operations, but this is not understood by the public at large.

Perhaps the stories and comments made through this book of pictures and anecdotes can help to address this travesty, and what it means when we are confronted by the 'End of An Era'.

The Guest House Era

We generally refer to the Guest House Era as the period from the 1930s to 1960s when almost every building on the Esplanade offered accommodation to visitors to the town, but the hospitality industry predates the town itself—the Roadknights (the first settlers) operated their home 'Merrangbaur' as a guest house way back in the 1860s.



Claremont House was established in 1911 and purchased at auction by Tasman & Alice Roadknight in 1921.

Alice Roadknight had the honour of cutting the ribbon at the official opening of the Cunninghame Arm footbridge in 1937.

Image: LERHS Collection



The original Federal Coffee Palace is on the right of the image. Note the cow in the street and the proximity to the lake front – just a few metres from the front door!

Image: LERHS Collection

featuring an exhibition of some of the many guest houses and hotels.

This will include the earliest available photos and changes through to the present time, together with a bit of the history and anecdotes about the owners, guests and notable events involving the various establishments.

Joy Wilmshurst has also curated a display of accoutrements of the era.

All visitors welcome during our normal opening hours 10-12 Tuesday mornings and 1.30-4 Saturday afternoons.

In response to the many queries we receive from people wanting to revisit a favourite holiday venue from their childhood or reminisce about a happy honeymoon, the Lakes History Centre is



Above: Marie-Lyn at Fraser Island and now on Newlands Arm.

Images: Sam Bull



What's the story of the Marie-Lyn

Seems like only a few years since the Marie-Lyn was ferrying passengers and supplies across to Fraser Island.

Marie-Lyn is now based in Newlands Arm in the private ownership of Sam Bull.

Sam and the Society would love to know some of the boat's history. She was built in the 1960s, but where and by whom? And what other endeavours has she been involved in over the last 60 years?

Please get in touch if you can help.

Funding finale?

In addition to the group's own fundraising endeavours, the Society receives a small annual payment from the Shire Council via our membership of Heritage Network East Gippsland.

The Heritage Network was established in 1996 with the aims of providing support to its member groups, advocating on their behalf and acting as a conduit in dealings with the Shire and other authorities.

During those 30 years the Network has functioned well, providing a forum for all the heritage groups of East Gippsland to come together and work towards common goals.

By meeting the conditions of a service agreement with the Shire, the groups have received a welcome addition to their funds to assist with expenses such as electricity and insurance.

This is now in jeopardy, as these funding arrangements have been reviewed and it appears that the heritage groups will need to vie with the arts community for grant money—on an initiative basis.

This will cause hardship for us and other small heritage groups, as those regular administrative expenses will not qualify under the grant criteria.

The funding of history is imperative, but our future is looking grim as the proposal goes before the Council meeting on 9 June and will, no doubt, be approved.

Still going strong at 96: the indomitable Marie Fish

At 96, Marie Fish is still a regular contributor to this newsletter, attends meetings and assists with our various research projects.

Marie was devastated recently when her 15-year old iPad died. No internet for searching out historical facts, adding to her family history or messaging friends!

In the meantime, Marie has continued to assist the Historical Society by sorting out a bulging file of documents and putting them into alphabetical order.

Fortunately a new replacement device has been purchased and normal 2026 life has resumed.



Marie heading out on her trusty scooter for a Monday morning medical appointment.

Image: Judy Davies