

# South Coast History Society Inc. RecollectionS

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Issue 29

**Our intriguing local history...EXPOSED !**



Australia Day, 18th August 1915, in Bodalla

## BODALLA'S HISTORIC BUILDINGS

**B**odalla township was established to serve the day-to-day needs of the Bodalla Estate, its employees and their families. It was their 'service centre' because, in the late 19th century and early 20th century, it took a considerable time to travel to larger 'nearby' alternative townships such as Moruya and Narooma.

It was certainly never planned that Bodalla have its main street transformed into a major highway (the town was initially a mile off the main north-south road) and it was also never intended to be a showy tourist town. So, by and large, its original buildings were simple, single story buildings with little external decoration.

A number of these original buildings have survived

– just enough to provide a sense of how the original village looked – so the village (in the compact section north from the Eurobodalla Road intersection) is now something of an interesting, historically-significant rural Australian 'time capsule'...and is, most certainly, worth exploring. A basic Bodalla Town Walk brochure can be downloaded from [www.southcoasttravelguide.com.au/bodalla](http://www.southcoasttravelguide.com.au/bodalla)

**All Saints Church**, at the northern approach to the village, is the most imposing building in town. But, whilst it has an interesting story in its own right and is the town's memorial to the town's founder, Thomas Mort, and his wife, it does not reflect the village's more modest historic character. This is more accurately reflected in timber-framed,

### Fantastic Reads

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weatherboard-clad, corrugated iron-roofed buildings such as the Groom's Cottage, the original butcher's shop, David Head's Cottage, the Doctor's House and the Bodalla Estate Company Secretary's Residence.

So, what are the historically interesting buildings in town?

Skip the Dairy Shed – but grab an ice cream! It was built just 12 years ago, albeit in a style that is sympathetic to the village streetscape. It is sited on land originally occupied by the post office, Bodalla Company offices and the Bodalla Estate store – on the strategic corner of the northern approach to the village. (The road south from Moruya originally ran up the hill between the Church and the Dairy Shed [in 1957 the road was repositioned to west of the Church after a new bridge over the Tuross River was built 100 metres upstream from the previous bridge; the route of the original road can still easily be traced] then swung eastward following the route of the current Princes Highway, before veering south-west into what is now Eurobodalla Road.)

Next door (at 56 Princes Hwy) is **The Groom's Cottage**, one of the oldest and most historically significant buildings in Bodalla. It was built around 1878 and is a classic, symmetrical timber Australian building, with a steeply pitched corrugated iron roof and front verandah. It was the town baker William Postill's cottage in the mid-1880s (it was part of his 'salary package' from the Bodalla Estate), and in the 1890s was the home of Tom Minogue who was the groom at the village stables that were behind the hotel across the road.

In 1926 the Groom's Cottage became a service station

and a few years later the **Garage** next door (at 58 Princes Hwy) was built. A petrol pump once sat between the two buildings. The garage is significant because it is a reminder of how the village changed when motor vehicles started to be acquired by locals and tourists started visiting or passing



The historic Bodalla Bakery Scotch Oven – fire box at the right and flue to the left.

through, the village.

The current Bodalla Community Hall (60 Princes Hwy) was built in 1957 on the site of a **Friendly Society Hall** that was built in the late 1870s and had a library added to it in the 1890s. So this site was an important community meeting place for dances, other social events and meetings.

The circa-1900 building at 62 Princes Hwy was once the town's **Butcher's Shop**. Next door (now 64 Princes Hwy) was the site of the **Blacksmith's Shop**, a **Carpenter's Shop** and possibly a **Bodalla Company Workshop**.

The 12-foot deep wood-fired scotch oven<sup>1</sup> inside the **Bakery** (66 Princes Hwy) is perhaps of greater heritage importance than the structure that was built around it – although the building with its distinctive doors to the street, timber-sash windows and steeply pitched corrugated iron roof contributes significantly to the historic village streetscape.

The adjacent retail bakery store is a mid-20th century building that also has been well designed to mirror the character of the surrounding 19th century structures.

The **Post Office and Postmaster's Residence** (66A Princes Hwy) was built in 1899, replacing the Post Office that was situated across the road from the Bodalla Arms Hotel. In 1907 the Post Office was given a lower semi-official status and



Bodalla, Main street, 1914

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did not return to having official status until early 1951. A gallery now occupies the residence section of the building.

In the early 1920s the Bodalla Estate started to sell off sections of its land and the modest wooden **Cottage** at 70 Princes Hwy was probably erected following these land sales, so is emblematic of changing times for the Bodalla Estate.

Towards the top of the hill (80 Princes Hwy) is the late 19th century Bodalla **Company Secretary's Residence**. It is a building with fine proportions and presentation.

The cottage at 84 Princes Hwy was built circa 1870 and was originally the Bodalla Estate **Doctor's House**. It remained so until towards the end of the century, after which time the Estate no longer employed a doctor. It then became the Estate Manager's residence. It has been believed that he moved into this house after he married and his wife indicated she preferred to live in Bodalla township rather than elsewhere on the sprawling Estate.

The **Court House and Police Station** building (100 Princes Hwy) was built some time after 1866 in Nerrigundah and was moved to Bodalla in 1928 – so it is not an original village building, but is an appropriate addition to the town's historic streetscape. The courthouse functioned until 1971. A weatherboard lock-up (not used nowadays!) can be seen at the rear of the building.

Opposite the Bodalla bakery, at No 85 Princes Hwy (now a plumbing store) was the village's **Billiard Room and Bar** and later (up until as recently as 1989) the **Bodalla Company Offices**. The Billiard Room and Bar was operated by David Head, a blacksmith who lived next door and had

Continued on page 4

## All Saints' Anglican Church, Bodalla

**T**homas Mort was a prominent Anglican layman. He donated the land on which St Mark's Church, Darling Point, was constructed and he contributed to the building of Sydney's St Andrew's Cathedral. He donated 59 acres of land in Bodalla as a Glebe (land intended to provide an income to support the Church Minister) and had intended to erect a church for the Bodalla community. He even imported, in advance, ten simple stained glass windows for it from England. But he died before any construction began.

The church that was to become All Saints' Church immediately became a memorial to Thomas and his first wife Theresa and was transformed from being a 'simple church' into one designed to accommodate 250 people. It was funded by the Mort family and the Bodalla community.


The Church was designed by Edmund Blacket who had been the architect of St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney, the main University of Sydney building, and Mort's Sydney home, 'Greenoaks' (now 'Bishopscourt') in Darling Point. Edmund Blacket's son, Cyril, who was also an architect, took over supervision of the project.

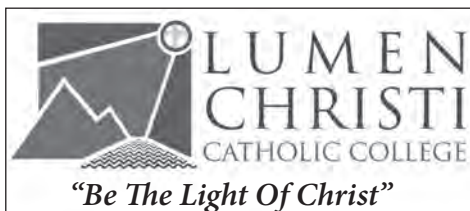
The Church was built in two stages – the first between 1880 and 1883, the second from 1899 to 1901. The granite that was used in its construction was quarried on the Estate. The Church was intended to be finished with a tall spire, but it was never built.



The entrance door with its intricate hand wrought iron hinges and straps, and the stone baptismal font, were designed by Edmund T Blacket himself, demonstrating the level of detail he provided in the designs for the Church. Within the Church is a particularly fine stained glass window that was financed as a tribute to Thomas Mort by the residents of Bodalla, along with numerous other objects that have associations with Thomas Mort and the extended Mort family.

A substantial Rectory was built for the town's Minister downhill from the Church (now unfortunately separated from the Church following the rerouting of the Princes Hwy) which remains in excellent condition today.

All Saint's Bodalla is widely considered to be 'one of the finest Churches in Australia'; 'one of the choicest ecclesiastical structures out of Sydney'. 



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his blacksmith's shop behind the Billiard Room. He opened it every night to serve wine and beer after the Bodalla Arms closed.

**David Head's Cottage** (83 Princes Hwy) was one of the cottages in the village that was built for workers on the Bodalla Estate. It probably dates to around 1910. The original roof shingles now sit under the iron roofing. The – now sadly neglected – magnolia in the front garden is a significant, very rare magnolia. It had been brought from England and planted by David Head's wife. Because of its

rarity, it featured in the Women's Weekly and it became the subject of a fight with the RTA and Eurobodalla Council when plans became known some decades back to widen the highway.

The **Bodalla Arms Hotel Stables** (79 Princes Hwy) were built around 1877 and are one of the oldest surviving structures in the village. They have served as stables, as a bank (in the 1940s the Commercial Bank sent a clerk to the town every Friday to handle the town's banking needs), as a storage area (drums of petrol were once stored here by the service station operator opposite) and as a shop.



Bodalla Arms Hotel, c. 1900

The **Bodalla Arms Hotel** (73 Princes Hwy) was built in 1910 to replace a previous hotel on the same site that had been erected in 1877 but which, by 1910, no longer met government requirements. This 1910 building was designed by Cyril Blacket, the son of Edmund Blacket who had designed Bodalla's All Saints Church. Originally there was an accommodation wing attached to the hotel, in the area between the hotel and the stables, that was once considered to provide the only acceptable accommodation for the well-to-do south of Kiama. It was demolished in the 1970s. On the other side of the hotel (now the hotel

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carpark) there was once an attractive, landscaped garden that included at least two public features – a sundial that is now located in an overgrown garden in the middle of the turning circle in front of All Saints Church, and the Bodalla War Memorial (now located adjacent to the Memorial Hall) that originally incorporated a World War I ‘trophy’ machine gun. Some interesting historic photographs of Bodalla hang on the walls of the hotel.

Slightly further afield but certainly also worth visiting are **St Edmund’s Catholic Church** (cnr Princes Hwy and Potato Point Rd) which was designed by John Horbury Hunt (an acclaimed Canadian-born Australian architect who worked for seven years with Edmund Blacket) reputedly copying a small chapel in a convent school in Belgium that the wife of Laidley Mort (T.S. Mort’s eldest son) had



The old Hotel at Bodalla, pre-1910. The acclaimed accommodation block is to the left.

attended. This Church, unusually, has its exterior walls clad with wooden shingles; the weatherboard **Old Bodalla School and Teacher’s Residence** (Eurobodalla Road), built in 1878 on five acres of land donated by TS Mort; and the **Old Bodalla Cemetery** where T.S. Mort is buried (further along Eurobodalla Road).



Sadly, there is no signage in Bodalla explaining the history of this interesting, historic village, nor is there any signage outside any of the original buildings. The installation of some good interpretive signage would considerably enhance the visitor experience of the village and would, undoubtedly, lead to an increase in the number of locals and tourists visiting the village. 

1. Scotch ovens are the traditional woodfired commercial bakers’ ovens that were once common in Australian regional towns. The oven itself has an arched ceiling and a fire box is located to one side and a flue is located on the opposite side. The oven’s shell is constructed from massive layers of brick and sand that are tied together with steel rods that contract and expand with the heat. Before baking commences, the fire is extinguished and the bread is then baked by a deep, even heat that is gradually released from the surrounding heated bricks and sand.

Sources:

*Bodalla Main Street Study; Bodalla Village Development Control Plan; The Story of Bodalla* by Shirley Doolan; *The Bodalla Estate from 1860 to 1989* by Helen Townend; *Bodalla and the Morts* by Laurelle Pacey; *Bodalla Town Walk* brochure. Further information about the Bodalla Estate and T.S. Mort was included in *Recollections 18*, accessible at [www.bit.ly/Recollections18](http://www.bit.ly/Recollections18)

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# The 'Murrah Archive' ... an irreplaceable community collection

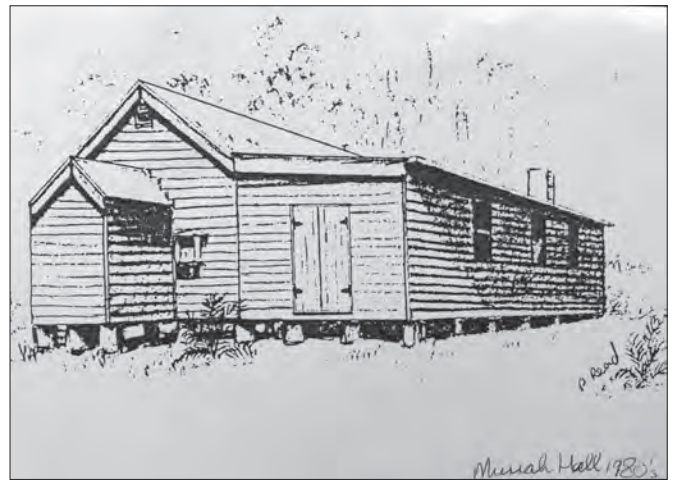
Dr Richard Reid

Communities come and go. Take a name on the map – Euralie – 15 kilometres or so slightly south west of Yass. No sign tells you, along the so-called Euralie Road in the middle of rolling pastoral country, that you've arrived. Yet, once, there was a little 'community' here with its own small public school which stuttered into life, in one shape or form, between 1873 and 1929. The school building has gone, and perhaps the most significant material object that points to Euralie's existence is a small World War I hand-made honour roll, unveiled in the building in 1918 and now in the collection of the Yass and District Historical Society. Euralie has effectively vanished and there is nothing to indicate you are in the vicinity.

What of the small 'communities' of the Bega Valley region? Here, at least, the traveller is made aware of the possible existence of something called 'locality'. Driving north from Tathra to Bermagui you pass through Mogareeka, Nelson, Tanja, Wapengo, Murrah, Barragga Bay and Cuttagee, all with colourful signposts indicating you have just entered say 'The Locality of Wapengo'. This process of 'locality' naming is followed throughout the highways and byways of the Bega Valley Shire, a testimony to an ongoing sense of the existence of some sort of local identity with such small, remote places.

Some of them are small. Take the 'Locality of Murrah',

for example. A localities profile, for Murrah called 'Murrah Summary Profile 2016', attached to the Bega Valley Shire Council website (be warned... if you approach this profile via the BVSC website you will need to locate the 'Community and Leisure' page, find the 'Community Profile' page and then drill down in that until you see the words 'Locality Snapshots' and from there choose Murrah on a localities map ... all good fun!). In 2016 there were 51 inhabitants of the Murrah, 26 males and 25 females and not a single individual aged between 0 and 34 years of age. Well over half of the land mass of the locality is in either national park



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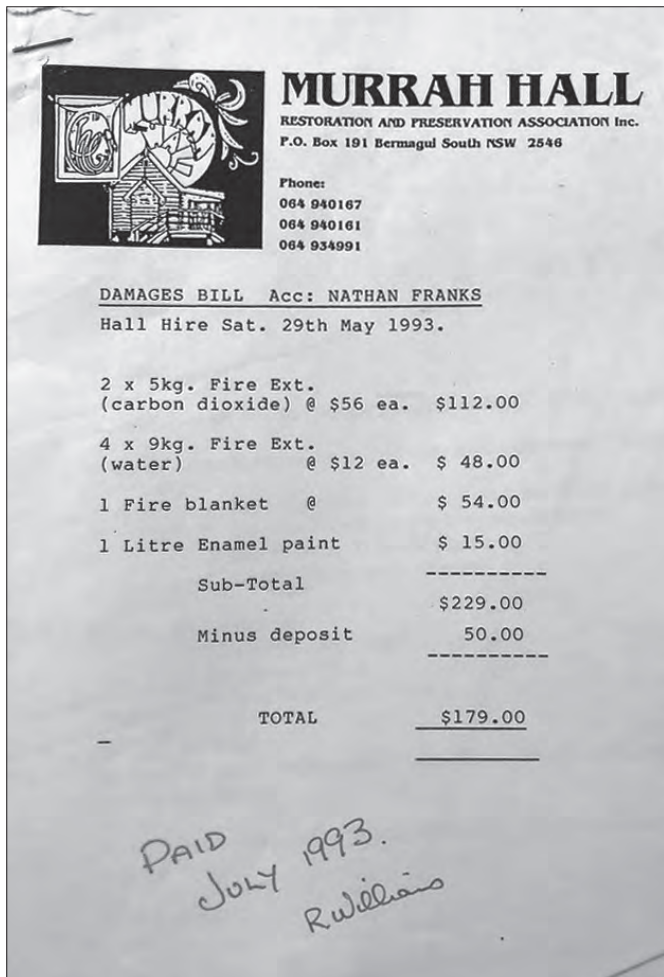
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What's the story behind this gem, preserved in the Murrah Archive?

or state forest, the rest being (at least visible from the main road) grass paddocks. Again, from the main road at least, there are but few signs of habitation...but one feature stands out, something you might miss driving rapidly through and concentrating on the road ahead, the 'Murrah Hall'. Nestling half hidden by trees up a steepish slope, a sign above the front entrance boasts proudly - 'Est 1903'. An uninformed travelling tourist from an anonymous city suburb might ask ... what is the 'hall' all about and why was it built in 1903?

Murrah Hall is not the only such building in the Bega Shire. Again, on the BVSC website under 'Local Facilities' - Venues for Hire' is a list of 22 such venues, 18 with the description 'Hall' attached. They are spread throughout the Shire from Cobargo in the north to Towamba in the south.

Not all of these began life as simply a 'hall'. In a comprehensive list of these buildings (kindly supplied, with brief invaluable historical descriptions, to the author by Pat Raymond of Pambula), we discover that what is now referred to as the 'Cobargo Hall' began life as the 'Cobargo School of Arts'. Eden's School of Arts building was demolished; Kameruka Hall is now in private ownership; the Dignam's Creek Hall has disappeared; and the Bermagui South Hall was destroyed by fire in 1951. A bit like Euralie in far off Yass, the Yambulla Hall is no more ... and, to quote Pam Raymond's terse summation of that structure's fate: 'By 1930 Yambulla had become a deserted village and no buildings exist now'.

Pat briefly describes 40 'hall' style buildings that once played, and to the extent that they survive, still play a role in the modern Bega Shire. But what role did they play and how can we understand that role?

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In seeking to answer that question we are fortunate to have a significant set of surviving records from the 'Murrah Hall'. This is a miscellaneous collection at the core of which are the minutes of the various groups responsible for running the hall since it was built in 1903. There are gaps: some decades,

not final archival titles, but the result of an initial effort by this researcher seeking to come to grips with a disparate collection.

Most tellingly, there is a fair amount of colourful and important material dealing with the planning and execution of events surrounding the 90th and 100th anniversary of the hall's erection. A small collection of old cassette tapes feature interviews with elderly residents and ex-residents leading into the anniversary celebrations and, amazingly, there is also a professionally edited video piece entitled 'The Murrah Hall - A Community Project' made by local film makers in 1994. This is a considerable amount of valuable, surviving material on just one of the old 'halls' of the Bega Valley region.

One wonders what material might exist for the other halls.

In a very real sense this 'Murrah Archive' is an irreplaceable memory bank for one small, remote NSW south coast locality. These fading, typescript and hand-written pages, and small collection of audio tapes, take us into the evolving and changing worlds of the residents of the farm-based Murrah, European settlers, as well as those who came much later to the area and strove to rescue Murrah Hall from oblivion in the last decades of the 20th century.

For years the material mouldered away in the damp, unwholesome environment of a shipping container positioned beside the hall. It was rescued by Bermagui resident Robyn Levy who, in the 1990s was part of the hall restoration effort, and its very existence raises the question - what has survived for other Bega Valley halls?

**It is imperative local people, especially those whose families have been in the area since European settlement, begin to ask this question** as the NSW south coast rapidly

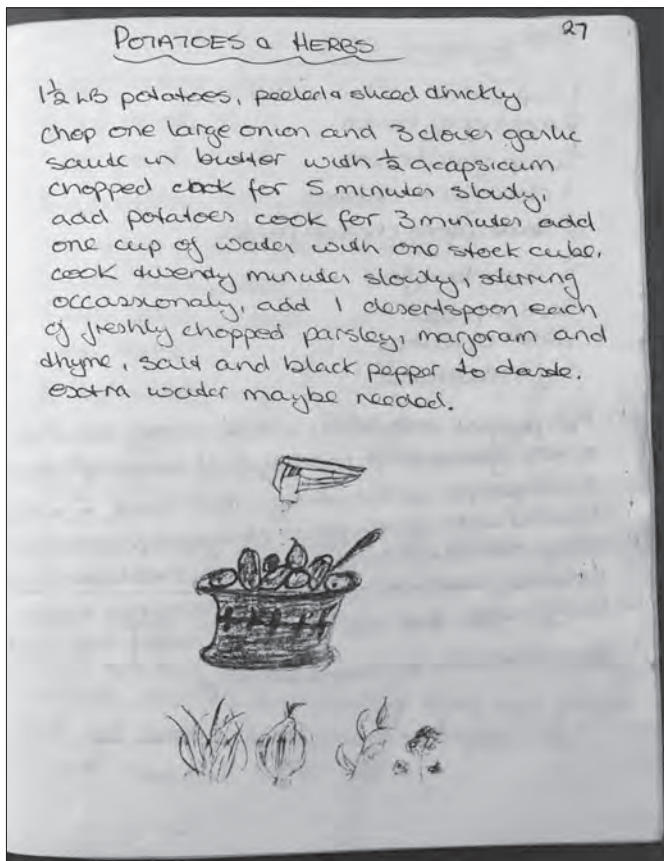
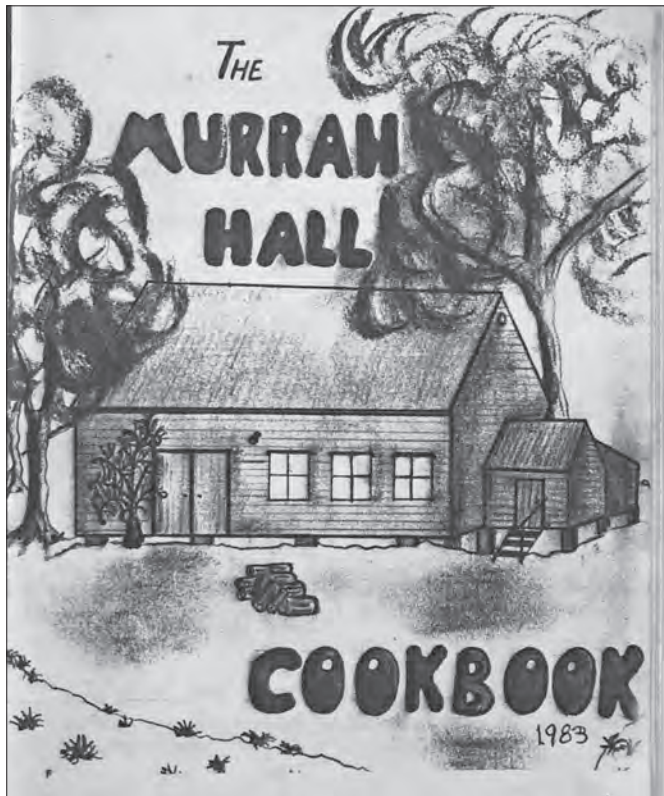
transforms itself into a paradise for 'blow-in' retirees with little understanding of, or commitment to, the area's previous settler history.

One example of the vulnerability of the Murrah record relates to the minute books for the period 1903 to the late 1960s. What survives in the 'Murrah Archive' are photocopies, sometimes with words missing. The originals were lent by a local Murrah family for copying, but have since disappeared back into the family. The fragile paper on which they were written will not survive far into the future unless preserved properly and in suitable environmental conditions. **And this material is every bit as important for an historical understanding of small Australian communities on the ground as seemingly more significant state and national collections.**

Moreover, the current south coast residents deserve to have collections like the 'Murrah Archives' available to them, not only for family research but also as a mine of

for example the 1990s, are far more extensively covered than other periods. Vitally, however, the fairly sketchy minutes for the early years concerning the building of the hall in 1903, and something of its subsequent use and development until the late 1960s, have survived. Allied to the minutes - what might be called the 'core of the collection' - is an assortment of documents, reports, short historical accounts, almost exclusively from the 1970s onwards, which can be arranged under headings such as 'Incorporation of Murrah Hall Restoration and Preservation Association and role of Public Officer, dealings with Bega Valley Shire Council, NSW Department of Consumer Affairs and Corporate Affairs Commission, 1986/1995 (includes Certificate of Incorporation, 1987)' or 'Murrah Hall groups e.g. Theatre Group (1980), Murrah Hall Restoration and Preservation Association (1987/1988) dealings with NSW Department of Local Government and the Land Board', relating to matters such as 'public entertainment and registration'. These are





A recipe from The Murrah Cookbook, produced in 1983 to raise money for the 80th Birthday of the Hall. The cookbook was compiled by Sue Dickson & Karan Went, illustrations by Albina Ryall.

information from which to extract the essential stories of the region. Five years ago, academics stumbled onto the archive and in a densely written piece – which would hardly have attracted the attention of coffee drinkers in downtown Bega! – utilised the archive to produce an essay entitled ‘A special Australian country thing: The small hall in

Australian country life’ (chapter 8 in Cultural Sustainability in Rural Communities – Rethinking Australian Country Towns). While it is a perfectly respectable, and a well-argued essay for the academy, Murrah residents of both today and yesterday might have found themselves unrecognisable in phrases such as ‘often used tactically to question or counter-narrate the official story of the past.’

The Murrah Hall story, as revealed in the ‘Murrah Archive’, and attendant sources such as local newspapers, needs telling to the Bega Valley community today as reminder of the significance of such little buildings but also as an incentive for other communities to seek out and preserve their own records. Then the ‘localities’ of the Bega Valley can perhaps avoid the fate of Euralie, a place almost, if not quite, lost to history. **R**

Dr Richard Reid is a Canberra-based historian. He was Irish-born and educated, and then worked for more than 40 years as a high school teacher, museum educator, historian and museum curator. Thirty of those years were spent in Canberra, in institutions including the Australian War Memorial, the National Museum of Australia, the Senate, and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. He is Vice President of Canberra & District Historical Society and is a frequent visitor to Tathra.

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Dr E C ('Ted') Blomfield was Pambula's doctor from August 1947 to December 1949. He then purchased a practice in Gipps St, Bega, where he practiced for 46 years before joining the Canning Street surgery for five years. He continued to visit the Hillgrove House nursing home until his death in 2001, providing the residents of the Bega Valley with 52 years of service as a GP. In 1997 he started recording his recollections because 'my family, colleagues, friends and patients have asked me, on numerous occasions, to record my life as a general Practitioner on the Far South Coast of NSW.' Regrettably, he never completed the task – but his memories of his days in Pambula have survived and, courtesy of his son Charlie, some of them are included below.

## A Country Doctor's Recollections

Let's start with a few of Dr Ted's memories of patients he attended:

*'A case that stands out in my mind is a patient with a back injury. His story was that he had a Harley Davidson motor bike and was kick starting it when it backfired and threw him over the handlebars. He hurt his back and was in severe pain and unable to move. I was out of Pambula at the time when the staff rang me with this history. I told them to give him morphine until I got back. They said his legs were completely paralysed and he had no feeling. Their diagnosis was a fractured spine with paralysis of the spine. I agreed with this. When I saw him he had absolutely no movement of the lower limbs and I could stick pins in his legs with no sign of pain. When I was a Resident at Hornsby Hospital, I had a patient with a similar story and I realised he was the same man. I looked at him and told him I had treated him at Hornsby. He let out a string of abuse and said it was just his rotten luck to strike me again. Then he got out of bed, got dressed, and shot out of the door never to be seen again.'*



*'A ship off the coast of Eden radioed in to the pilot that they had a very ill diabetic on board who kept fitting. I was asked would I go to Eden to meet the boat. I went on board to see this fellow who looked very crook and was obviously an alcoholic [It is not uncommon for chronic alcoholics to have epileptic fits if they suddenly stop drinking.] However, he was able to walk off the ship accompanied by an ambulance driver and myself. We were walking along the wharf when he suddenly started to fit and fell off the side of the wharf. There he was fitting just under the surface. A very big well-built Norwegian fisherman was on the wharf and he dived in and held onto the wharf with one hand and held the patient up with the other hand. It was quite a feat of strength. He pulled him out and put him in the ambulance and he was taken to hospital. We were able to stabilise his diabetes and control his fits and we were able to send him back to Sydney within a week. That is not the end of the story. About three days later our Norwegian fisherman was brought into hospital unconscious. Fortunately, prior to discharge from the Army, I was looking after a ward of*

*malaria patients for 6 months. Had I not had this experience there was no way I would have been able to diagnose and treat him. He was suffering from cerebral malaria, usually a fatal disease. He made a full recovery.'*

*'A man living in Eden was a drover. He used to drove cattle regularly to Bega sale yards. The sales were held on Tuesdays. This man used to ride back to Pambula and visit the hotel after sale days. A session at the Pambula Lower Pub was a routine. He would take the saddle and bridle off and face*

*the horse towards Eden and slap him on the rump. He would drink until the 9 pm bus arrived and would catch it carrying his saddle and bridle and pick up his horse at Eden.*

*One day he was sawing firewood for the Australasia Hotel and instead of a piece of wood, he sawed off his arm. The Eden Ambulance was called and he was taken post haste to Pambula Hospital where I was able to operate. Les Best, the manager of South Pambula Butter Factory, was my number one blood donor. He saw the ambulance and when I had finished the operation I found him waiting on the doorstep. He*

*said he thought I might need blood which, I can assure you, I was very grateful to have.*

*I asked the patient what happened. He said he somehow got his arm under the saw instead of the wood. He told me he picked up the arm and took it into the kitchen. The cook, who was from Europe, took one look at it and fainted so he was no further ahead. I might point out on this occasion he was sober.'*

*'I made a rare visit to the cinema to see a film of the wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip. I had only been there ten minutes when I got an urgent call to a house just behind the Pambula hospital. I had never been to the house before. By the dim light of a smoky lamp all I could see was a man wobbling about with blood all over his head. I started towards him when a voice from under the table cried, "He's not the patient. I am." What appeared to be blood on the man's head was the tomato sauce she had thrown at him.'*

*'The closest dentists were at Bega. The roads were rough*



and there were very few cars. Some people would not, or could not, leave their homes. One dental case remains very fresh in my mind. A farmer from Towamba came to Pambula with the toothache. He wanted me to pull his sore tooth. I realised this would not be easy and suggested he go to Bega. He replied that his wife was due any day and he could not be away too long. Finally, I agreed to extract the offending tooth. I remarked that I did not know much about pulling teeth but he said to give it a go. I injected the procaine, which is slow acting and not as effective as our present local anaesthetics. I fastened on to the tooth and with a lot of pulling etc there was a mighty crack and the crown of the tooth came off and he passed out. On regaining consciousness his first remark was "You were quite right, you don't know much about pulling teeth."

I also had to treat animals. I particularly remember a dog owned by Vic Hart who was a drover. Anyone who has ever lived on the land realises that a drover's dog is one of his most valuable assets. The dog and the drover become very close and depend on each other. The dog is a very faithful servant. Having spent my boyhood on a sheep and cattle property I was aware of the bond. Vic brought his dog in with a broken leg and I think he was more distressed than the dog. Flo [Dr Ted's wife] and I took Vic and the dog into the laundry where we set and plastered the leg. The result was excellent.

Dr Ted noted that 'many things have changed radically in the last 50 years – the ambulance service, drug therapy (which was mainly symptomatic but is now specific and symptomatic), anaesthetics, and ancillary services'...as have the simple day-to-day challenges facing a country doctor:

'At Pambula after hospital rounds, surgery hours were from 10am till 1pm Monday to Saturday, and Tuesday afternoons 2pm to 6pm except for one Tuesday a month, when I went to Towamba.

Saturday evening was busy. People would come to the Pictures and to see the doctor at the same time. I was in trouble if they were late for the Pictures. Sunday they used to combine church and seeing the doctor.'

'On Saturday afternoon I would do the dispensing as there was no chemist. Bottles were scarce and we encouraged people to bring their bottles to the surgery. I offered threepence a bottle and Flo washed them and boiled them up in the old wood fired copper. Some were covered in dirt and looked as if they had been dug up.'

'On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, I would hold surgery at Eden. The surgery was a little wooden building opposite the present Fisherman's Club. Surgery started at 2pm until 5 or 6pm and then I did house calls before arriving back in Pambula at 8 or 9pm. I would have my evening meal and then attend to things that had built up, an odd pain, hospital visit, or dispensing.'

'After several months in Pambula I was asked if I would do a surgery at Towamba where there were numerous children who had not been immunised. They arranged for me to have a room in Parker's Wine Bar, which had accommodation. The room had a double bed with a kapok mattress that sagged about 12 inches in the middle. Not very satisfactory



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for examining a patient. There was a marble washstand with a large china jug of water and a basin. There was a china chamber pot under the bed. The rent for the room was 2/6 for the afternoon. I used to see 20 to 30 patients, mostly children for immunisation. The men used to congregate in the wine bar and became noisier and noisier as the afternoon progressed. I worked at the other end of the building and the children crying as each received their needle became noisier and noisier. By the end of the afternoon the Towamba residents had a gala day. Then there was the lonely trip home doing calls at Burragate and Wyndham on the way. It was a return trip of about a hundred miles over rough and winding roads. I arrived home between 10 and 11pm for my evening meal.

The off-duty hospital staff then decided they would like to come for the trip and used to bring a meal which we usually had at Jingara Creek. It was very much appreciated...I did surgery at Eden on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, Merimbula on Thursdays and Towamba once a month. There was an open invitation to any of the staff who wished to go with me on any of these trips or night visits to the country. Many of the staff availed themselves of this arrangement. It filled in time for them and enabled them to see the countryside.'

'I remember one call to Burragate very well. When I arrived I was told the patient was in the toilet and then had to have a shower, so they gave me a twelve gauge shot gun and sent me out to shoot rabbits until the patient was ready. Unfortunately, the luck was with the rabbits.'

'I was called to Palestine near Eden to sew up a dog, which had a very extensive laceration on its shoulder after being hit by a car. I asked the owner to hold him while I put the stitches in. He said "Not on your life. He is too savage." However, after several near misses to my hand, I managed to insert the stitches. I also had to treat "An orse with the hitch."

'In 1948 I had a call to Towamba and on the other side of Eden there was a bang followed by a grating noise. The gearbox was the problem. I found that I did not have first or reverse gear. As the call to Towamba was urgent I managed to complete the journey. On arriving back in Pambula I took the car to the garage and they sent away for new parts, only to be informed that they would have to come from England, which would take 3 to 4 months. It was impossible to run a practice without a car. Bill Whitby owned the local garage and also the local taxi. He lent me the taxi free of charge for about 6 to 8 weeks. He used to do his taxi calls when I was doing surgery and at night. I will never forget his generosity and cooperation. When Dr Eric Marshman [in Bega] heard of the situation he offered me his second car, a Chrysler, free of charge for as long as I needed it. Also, a very kind and generous act. I applied for a new car and was granted a permit to purchase a new Chevrolet. The price was £713 pounds. Bill Whitby said it was a pity to have to pay that price when I could have waited until the price went down!!'


'In the car I always carried an axe and a shovel, which were used frequently. Trees across the road, getting bogged, and mending punctures were a way of life. The canvas water bag was always carried on the front of the car. The water kept nice

and cool and always had a pleasant and unique taste.

The roads were rough. Volunteers manned the ambulance, and the closest specialists were in Sydney. There was no Air Ambulance and to telephone Sydney was a major exercise. Sometimes you would get through and sometimes you would not. In other words, we were on our own. Candelo, Bega and Pambula had a total of five doctors and we had to deal with all illnesses, accidents, emergencies, and confinements.'

'I had several encounters with gypsies on the Pambula/Eden road. On the first occasion I was returning to Pambula one evening when I saw a girl lying on the road. I slowed down and before I knew it gypsies surrounded the car. My window was half down and my wallet was in my inside coat pocket. The next thing I knew a gypsy was handing back my wallet minus the small amount of money I carried. I have no idea how he managed to get it. Their main objective was petrol coupons as petrol was rationed. Fortunately, I had signed my coupons and the petrol cap had a lock on it.'

"Rostherne" in Quondola St was our home and place of practice. It is now Covington's Restaurant. The surgery and dispensary were at the south west end of the house and patients usually waited on the verandah... Most of the hospital nursing staff was from Sydney except for Sister Maddern. None had cars and bus travel overlapped their shifts at the hospital so they could have lived a restricted and lonely life. Flo was a trained nurse and invited them to make our house their home when they were off duty. This they did. This arrangement gave them some home environment and was company for Flo and helpful in playing with Charles and Catherine. It was a very satisfactory arrangement to all concerned.'

'Up until about 1960, all hospitals had Honorary Medical Officers [HMOs]. In the late 1950s Dr John McKee, Dr Frank Ireland, and myself were doing 80% of hospital work in an honorary capacity. These days Visiting Medical Officers [VMOs] are paid for services to public patients.' Dr Blomfield was forced to retire as a VMO in 1984 when the Hospital Commission reduced the age at which they would appoint VMOs from 70 to 65. "That was one of the biggest disappointments of my life," Dr Blomfield observed. During the many decades that he practiced in Pambula and Bega, he delivered 3,133 babies! 

(We know that many local families hold family or business histories, such as this – ones that may, or may not, have ever been completed. These are EXTREMELY important historical records which really must be preserved. If you have one of these histories, we urge you to provide a copy to your local historical society, museum or library, or at least allow them to copy what you have.)

## **In Tuross Head**

'Recollections' is available from

- **Tuross Head Newsagency**
- **Tuross Head Country Club**



## John Ronaldson Logan – Eden Community Leader

John Logan arrived in the Twofold Bay area around 1900 and became a next-door neighbour to the well-known Davidson whaling family. In fact, the Davidsons used Logan's motor launch, *White Heather*, when chasing whales.

One day, around 1923, George Davidson and John Logan were fishing from *White Heather* when Old Tom, a killer whale (or orca – actually a dolphin, not a whale), drove a small whale to the surface of the water and George was able to harpoon it. A tug-of-war then developed between Logan and Old Tom for the carcass of the whale. This resulted in Old Tom losing a couple of its teeth.

Logan, a former military vet realized that missing teeth could become a problem for orcas and reputedly exclaimed: 'Oh God, what have I done?'

About seven years later Old Tom died. There was an abscess in its mouth caused by the missing teeth, and the cause of its death was starvation.

Logan then, perhaps partly out of guilt, vowed to preserve Old Tom's skeleton and provide it with a mausoleum.

Logan paid George Davidson and his son Wallace to clean and number Old Tom's bones and then, in January 1931, he called a meeting through the local newspaper to discuss how to preserve and house the skeleton.

Initially Old Tom's skeleton was displayed at the Twofold Bay Development League Rooms in Imlay Street, Eden. Visitors were charged 1/- to view the display and £70 was raised. This sum became the start of a fund that eventually enabled the Eden Killer Whale Museum to open in 1939.

Regrettably, Logan died in late 1937 so never witnessed the completion of the building he initiated.

John Logan, however, was also involved with other more significant projects that had a more wide-ranging impact on the Eden district community.

In the early 1920s a Twofold Bay Development League was formed in an attempt to develop the NSW South Coast region. John Logan (who envisaged the creation of a new



J R Logan, pictured when the Eden Log Cabin was being built



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state that would include the Monaro and the area west to Wagga Wagga, Northern Gippsland, and the area south of Tathra, with Twofold Bay serving as its port) became its President, a post he held until his death, and offices for the League were opened in Imlay Street, Eden. A generator was later installed behind this building and it provided the first town electricity to homes, businesses and for street lighting in Eden.

Politicians were invited to Eden to be shown the potential of the area and, in 1926, the Development League published a substantial, remarkably informative book, 'Southern Eastern Gate' to promote the district (for details see [www.bit.ly/begahh92](http://www.bit.ly/begahh92)). Copies were sent to influential people all around Australia.

The League also set up branches in many surrounding towns and villages. It lobbied untiringly for the development of Twofold Bay as a major port, for the establishment of the Snowy River Hydro-Electric Scheme, for the establishment of a paper mill at Twofold Bay, and for improved road and rail infrastructure in the area.

Another more local, but no less important, community project for John was the construction of Eden's Log Cabin.

His youngest daughter, Margaret, was a Girl Guide leader and, at that time, the Eden Girl Guides were renting space in Begaville House (next door to the current museum). So, John decided to erect a Canadian log cabin-style hall for them on land that he purchased from the Presbyterian Church in 1935.

The cost was £1,500. The community contributed £500, John Logan paid the remainder.

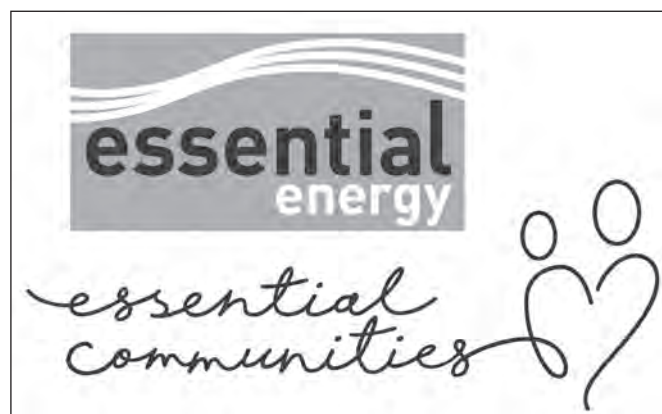
The building was completed and opened on 29th February 1936. The construction of the Log Cabin was a local community project that employed a nucleus of skilled men, including three boat builders and a mason, assisted by numerous working bees that were organized by Logan and

the families of Eden Girl Guides.

Guiding ceased in Eden during World War II because of a lack of leaders, so John Logan's widow, Mary, sold the family home (Edrom Lodge, a 28-room Federation Arts & Crafts style manor that was designed by John Logan and built between 1910 and 1913 on land that had originally been a base for Ben Boyd's activities at East Boyd) and she moved to the Log Cabin after purchasing it from the Girl Guides Association. She resided there until shortly before her death in 1963. (In 1979, Imlay Shire Council purchased the building to house the Eden Library. The Library ultimately relocated in 2003. The Log Cabin was heritage listed in 1990 and in 2004 was restored by Bega Valley Shire Council. There is a stone memorial to John Logan and his wife in its gardens.)

John Logan has been described as both a visionary 'ideas man' and a practical 'doer'...a leader who contributed enormously to the development of Eden and its surrounding district.

This feature has been made possible through the Essential Energy Community Choices program.



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## Edrom Lodge

Edrom, on the southern shore of Twofold Bay, was originally the home of John Logan and his large family.

It was built between 1910 and 1913 on land where Oswald Brierley, a talented artist who was to become official Marine Painter to Queen Victoria and who was the manager of Benjamin Boyd's whaling venture, had lived in the 1840s.

It was designed by John Logan, its design was modelled on his Scottish home, and it was named after his Scottish home.

Edrom cost £34,000 to build and 300 workmen were employed during its construction. A small temporary settlement was established nearby to house them.

This 28-room manor was constructed of bricks and stone (the bricks were made locally at Fisheries Flat, just to the south of the house, and the granite was quarried locally and transported to the site using bullock teams) and it has a terracotta tile



roof. The tiles were imported from France as ships' ballast.

It is a superb example of Federation Arts & Crafts style architecture. This resulted in its being heritage listed by the National Trust in 1980.

The Logan family resided at Edrom Lodge until after John Logan's death in 1937.

It then became a guesthouse for the well-to-do. In 1949 it became a fishing lodge and, later, returned to being a guesthouse.

In 1970, Edrom Lodge was resumed by the State Government. In 1972 it became a pre work-release centre for the NSW Department of Corrective Services, with the Daily

Telegraph (10th February 1972) reporting 'The Government resumed the property - in other words snatched it and took it over - as a site for Forestry Commission work. There was a certain amount of grumbling about the price, and there still is,



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but the fact remains that the Lodge is now owned by the Forestry Commission and now incredibly the Commission or the Department of Justice wants to make the place a prison farm... (for) twenty five convicts lolling about in Edrom Lodge enjoying the view that people used to pay for.' It concluded: 'Reason has flown. How sad, how bitter, to despair finally of one's fellow man in a place called Eden.'

Edrom Lodge did not remain a Corrective Services facility for long. In 1972–1973 it housed only three prisoners; in 1973–74, only 52 detainees were taken in to 'loll about, enjoying the view that people used to pay for', with an average daily occupancy of nine. The Lodge closed its doors as a corrections facility in 1975.

It is now used for conferences, educational activities and group activities, and can accommodate 68 people in dormitory-style rooms. **R**



Edrom Lodge with Twofold Bay in the foreground.

## Eden's Log Cabin

Eden's Log Cabin is a markedly different construction to Edrom Lodge, and it was built to be a public building whilst Edrom Lodge was constructed as a family home. However, both buildings have the distinction of having been designed by John R Logan, both were constructed primarily of local materials, and both are now considered to have significant local heritage value.

In 1935 Logan purchased a block of land in Bass Street, Eden, (just off the main street) from the Presbyterian Church so that he could construct a hall for the local Girl Guides. He then designed a rustic North American-style log cabin, built a scale model of it using dowling and wooden match boxes, and took the model to Sydney to convince the Guides Association that his project had merit.

Construction proceeded rapidly, utilising local tradesmen and volunteer working bees that were organized by Logan and the families of local Girl Guides. When the hall was officially opened on 29th February 1936, the local paper suggested there was not another building like it in Australia, that it was destined to become one of Eden's most prominent landmarks and, through it, that John Logan would be remembered for many years.

The Log Cabin was constructed of round local eucalypt poles with notched corners, caulked with oakum (tarred fibre – the traditional way that gaps in timber ships were sealed; this was hardly surprising considering that a number of the tradesmen employed to build the Log Cabin were actually local boat builders!). A pebble-faced chimney and internal fireplace, footings, and entrance steps are other



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distinctive features of the building.

The Log Cabin's design and construction are distinctive, and represented a significant departure from the then more-usual Australian practice of using either timber slabs or timber frames and weatherboard in buildings that were designed to have a rustic appearance.

The Log Cabin functioned as a Guides' hall until about 1941. During World War II, the hall was used for conducting medical tests of local men wishing to enlist in the armed forces.

The Log Cabin then experienced a period of being privately owned, initially by John Logan's widow, Mary, who

bought the property from the Girl Guides Association. Few significant changes were made to the building over those years.

In 1979 the Log Cabin was acquired by the Imlay Shire Council, was extended and significantly modified, and then it housed the Eden Library until 2003. It was heritage listed in 1990. Today it is used as a community hall. **R**

Sources for above stories: Wikipedia; *Four Stories: The Last Killer in Eden* by Jake Evans; Sydney Morning Herald 17.10.2010; southeasthistoriccollections; Eden Killer Whale Museum and Edrom Lodge websites; Eden Community Site.

## HISTORIES

# DEFIANT VOICES: How Australia's Female Convicts Challenged Authority

by Babette Smith

When I purchased *Defiant Voices*, I had a good inkling that it would be a worthwhile read. It was produced by NLA Publishing (NLA meaning National Library of Australia) who, in my experience, issue high quality books that are well laid out and lavishly illustrated, and include interesting and engaging Australian histories.

I was not to be disappointed.

The book is promoted as describing how Australian women convicts used 'shouting, wailing, singing, dancing and mockery in a war of attrition against authority.' In a way it does...and convicts certainly used these 'weapons' from time to time as a means of asserting their collective power.

But, to me, this book seemed to be more of an attempt to correct many wide-held misapprehensions about the conditions under which female convicts were held and the treatments they received. So *Defiant Voices*, as a title for the book, seems to have been more of a marketing decision than a true indication of the main theme of the book...and this is reflected when the author acknowledges 'I ran the final two options (for the title) past my Twitter friends, who overwhelmingly favoured *Defiant Voices*, which settled the matter.'

So don't judge this book by its title.

If I were to reveal many of Babette's conclusions about how women convicts were (in her view) actually treated I'd be spoiling a revealing and, in many passages, a quite amusing read:

'All are certain of marrying, if they please; Proposals are plentiful', wrote gentlewoman Louisa Meredith in Van Diemen's Land. And she was right. There were pros and cons for women, created by their scarcity in the colonies. It made them vulnerable to assault and brutality, but it also created opportunity. And the immediate opportunity for most women was marriage.

Among themselves, marriage gave a woman status. A married woman was acknowledged by her peers as 'Mrs Jones', 'Mrs Smith', 'Mrs Maloney', 'Mrs McKenna'. In the penal colonies, however, marriage offered more than status. As the women soon discovered, it could be a route to freedom and perhaps even prosperity. They recognized that pragmatism must influence their choice about which marriage proposal to accept. Their male counterparts understood. In the women-starved colonies, men were also very conscious that they must get the jump on their competitors if they could.

In 1824, the ship 'Almorah' anchored at Sydney, carrying

109 female convicts from Cork. The day before the women disembarked, they were on deck inspecting the town from afar when their captain, George Bayly, described how 'a young man came alongside and asked to speak with the chief mate'. He told the mate he had come to look for a wife.

The Chief Mate laughed and told him to look round and see which he liked the best. He had plenty to choose from, indeed so many that for a time he was completely puzzled. I suppose looking for the prettiest... At last he fixed his eyes on a young girl about 17 years of age and asked if she should like to be married. She said she had no particular objection. 'Observe,' said the young man, 'it is not for myself I want you. I am already married, but for a friend of mine who is unfortunately very busy today and could not come off to the Ship'. He then described his friend and the girl said she would have him. So, he took down her name and wishing her good morning, went ashore again. The day after the women arrived at the Factory [the Parramatta female factory, where unmarried women inmates were lined up on Sundays for potential suitors to inspect!] this gentleman's friend...enquired for the young woman, brought her down to Sydney and married her on the same day.

...In fact, walking down a Sydney street some days later, Captain Bayly met one of his passengers who had taken the opportunity to make a factory marriage. 'Ah! Mary Moore is it you?' he greeted her. And he recorded that she replied, 'Sure, and it's not me, Mr Bayly, I am not Mary Moore at all'. She had married a man who, she told the Captain, was

'worth some thousands'. Whatever the truth of her husband's means, the former Mary Moore had examined his prospects before she agreed to marry him. Affection mattered, but when poverty and, in this case, penal servitude prevented control over your own life, affection must give way to common sense.'

This passage perhaps provides you with a hint that

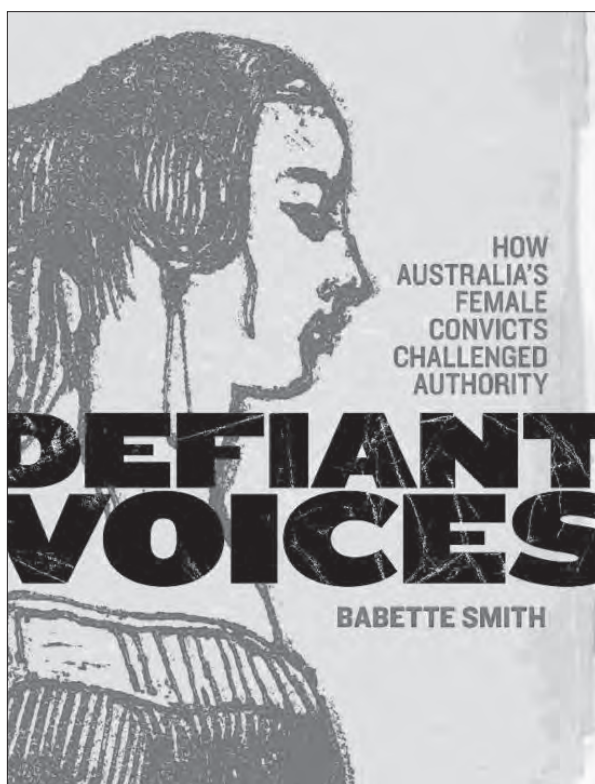
'Defiant Voices' is a narrative that is far removed from the traditional view that 'the dire reputation of convict women' was justly-deserved, that they were 'depraved', 'whores' and 'a danger to society' – a reputation that, incidentally, led Western Australia to refuse to take any female convicts at all from the day it became a penal colony in 1850.

There is one particular fact in this book that was a real revelation to me. This was that a very significant number of children (particularly babies) were taken from their mothers when they (their mothers) were transported to Australia or were consigned to female factories in Australia. So, this period of our history (and, again in later eras, when babies were often taken at

birth simply because their mothers were unmarried at the time) illustrates that the concept of 'stolen generation' in Australian history applies very much more widely than to just the now more highly-publicised Aboriginal instances that occurred from 1910 to 1969.

'Defiant Voices' is available in paperback from around \$38.

Review by *Peter Lacey*




## Essential Energy Supports South Coast History Society

Essential Energy (the authority that looks after the electricity poles and wires that deliver electricity to 90% of NSW, including the NSW South Coast area) has recently provided South Coast History Society with funding to underpin the production of 'Recollections' for the next 12 months.

This support (along with any other financial support we receive) is **vital**ly important to us because, with a significant ever-increasing demand for copies of 'Recollections', South Coast History Society is now faced with having to raise around \$25,000 every year simply to fund the costs of printing and distributing 'Recollections' (a not-insubstantial challenge for a small, totally volunteer-based, not-for-profit community group!).

Essential Energy, through its community support programs, regularly partners with a select number of innovative, future-focused local groups that contribute

significantly to their local communities. We at South Coast History Society are, therefore, absolutely delighted that the enormous value of 'Recollections' to our local community has been recognized and, with this grant, has been rewarded by Essential Energy – and we sincerely thank Essential Energy for both this recognition and for their greatly-appreciated financial support.

Our hope is that other businesses providing services to the South Coast will now follow Essential Energy's lead and also help South Coast History Society to continue to provide – and significantly expand – our valuable, highly-regarded, community-oriented activities. 





## Local Historian Honoured

It was very pleasing to see that the contributions made over recent years by Myf Thompson were formally recognised with the award of a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the recent Queen's Birthday Honours List.

The award was 'for service to the community of Batemans Bay', noting particularly her Committee role on the Clyde River & Batemans Bay Historical Society, as Honorary Curator of the Batemans Bay Heritage Museum, and her invited participation in the Standards Review Committee of Museums & Galleries NSW.

Myf is also a long-time active member of the Bay Theatre Players, and was on the founding executive of Eurobodalla Seniors



Computer Users Group.

Myf has been a member of the Batemans Bay Historical Society for 14 years holding the position of Secretary, then the Museum's Honorary Curator for the past eight. In 2019 Myf was awarded life membership of the Society for her commitment to progressing the objectives of the organisation.

As part of the Society's succession planning, Myf will step back from curatorial duties over the next 12 months. As an oral historian, Myf intends focussing her Society time on building its Oral History collection.

We congratulate Myf for this very well-deserved honour. 

## Highlighting Our History, 24/7

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Many interesting stories about our past have been included in 'Recollections' (and there are many more to come!) All of these can be accessed on-line. Start by visiting [www.bit.ly/Recollectionsindex](http://www.bit.ly/Recollectionsindex) to see what's available. This site will direct you to appropriate issues of 'Recollections'.

We are often asked if paper copies of past issues of 'Recollections' are available. Some past issues are available from Eden Antiques and Well Thumbed Books in Cobargo. We can currently also supply issues numbers 17 to 19 and 23 to 28, but ask that you help us offset postage and handling charges with a \$5 donation. Phone 0448 160 852 and we'll arrange to charge your credit card.

You can have future issues of 'Recollections' emailed to you at no charge. Simply email 'Send Recollections' to [southcoasthistory@yahoo.com](mailto:southcoasthistory@yahoo.com). If there is a story you'd like us to include in 'Recollections', we'd also be delighted to hear from you.

Detailed information about 101 interesting local 'objects' was recently assembled under a 'Bega Shire's Hidden Heritage' banner. Start by visiting [www.bit.ly/101objectsbooklet](http://www.bit.ly/101objectsbooklet) to discover what was included and to access the libraries of information for each of these objects.

And a comprehensive history of Bega township is currently being compiled. This includes heaps of interesting information about this historic town. The best starting point


is [www.bit.ly/begahistory](http://www.bit.ly/begahistory) which will also lead you to other sites where you will find additional intriguing information.

Have fun as you discover more about your fascinating local history...any time, any day!

\* \* \*

We're regularly delighted to learn how stories in 'Recollections' interest and, in some cases, help others.

For example, we recently were contacted by a Professor of History in Queensland who is researching the history of communes and group-based communities in Australia. He is also compiling an 'Encyclopedia of Australian Utopian Communalism' – which already includes over 700 entries. Our article on 'An Imaginative South Coast Socialist Experiment' about the Bega Labour Settlement, in *Recollections* 25 (available at [www.bit.ly/Recollections25](http://www.bit.ly/Recollections25)), had come to his attention. (This Bega Labour Settlement is particularly interesting because it was a government-initiated community – unlike the more usual religiously-oriented or pacifist or anarchistic communities, or those established with environmentally sustainable motives, or those established as cohousing co-operatives.)

We've now been asked to gather more detailed information about the Bega Labour Settlement for the Encyclopedia (to expand on the information in our 'Recollections' article) and to also source information for the Encyclopedia about Bend – another interesting community eco-neighbourhood located in Bega. 

### and finally...

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- ▶ And did we mention back Issues of *Recollections* are available, free, in PDF format at [www.bit.ly/RecollectionsX](http://www.bit.ly/RecollectionsX) where X is the issue number (1 to 28, except for Issue 3 which is 3- and Issue 10 which is 10-).

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