

South Coast History Society Inc.

RecollectionS

Issue 9, August 2018

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Who am I? The Bega Pioneers' Museum recently 'inherited' thousands upon thousands of photographs from the Estate of the late Kevin Tetley. Photography was Kevin's life – his job, his interest (alongside his interest in local history!), his passion. These photographs (prints, negatives, film) record much of the social history of the Bega Valley from the past 50 years ... but most (particularly those of people) are simply photographs of undocumented subjects. So Bega Pioneers' Museum is now faced with the enormous challenge of putting names to faces, dates and places (along with those interesting accompanying stories!!) to photos of events. Help from the local community will be essential if they are to succeed. Some photos are displayed at <https://www.facebook.com/begavalleyhistoricalsociety/>; the remainder can be viewed at the Museum (6492 1453). Photos courtesy Bega Pioneers' Museum.

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When Smithy Came to Bega

by Andrew McManus

Sir Charles Kingsford Smith was one of Australia's and the world's great aviators. After serving gallantly in the Australian Flying Corps over the Western Front from 1916 to 1918, he came home determined to make a career for himself in aviation and to help Australian aviation develop its potential.

In June 1927, he became the first person to fly from the



USA to Australia and in September of the same year, the first to fly from Australia to New Zealand. In 1930, he achieved the first east-west crossing of the Atlantic, against the prevailing winds of the Gulf Stream. "New York gave him a tumultuous welcome", according to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. By 1928, 'Smithy' was a national hero, acclaimed in songs

such as "Hats Off to our Airmen" and "Kingsford Smith, Aussie is Proud of You." In 1931, the Post Office released a range of postage stamps bearing his image (the first time a living person had been so commemorated) and in 1932, he was knighted. He even figured in advertisements:

FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

Yet, despite the fame generated by his remarkable achievements, by 1932, according to the Dictionary, "Kingsford Smith was almost back to where he had started, selling joy-flights at ten shillings a trip". In 1931, Australian National Airlines, founded by Kingsford Smith and his co-pilot Charles Ulm, went bankrupt after the crash of two of its aircraft and in March 1932, he crashed the famous Southern Cross on landing after a night flight over Sydney to celebrate the opening of the new Harbour Bridge. As Peter Fitzsimmons puts it "... six weeks and £1500 later, he had no choice but to head back out again, through Wellington, Warren Narromine, Dubbo ..." and Bega.

THE WEDDING, 1929

Smithy was no stranger to Bega. In 1929, he had been the best man at the wedding of his cousin Raymond Kingsford in Bega, where, so the *Southern Recorder* tells us, he "attracted almost as much public attention as the bride" – a comment

the bride must have treasured!

Smithy generously lent the newly-weds his car, a 1928 Studebaker President Straight Eight, of 100 horsepower, valued at £1000. However, on their return journey from their honeymoon at Genoa, they drove through a bushfire and a tree collapsed across the front of the car, forcing them off the road towards a deep gully south of Eden. The tree crushed the front of the car and trapped the driver's foot on the brake. They stopped at the edge of the gully. They were rescued by local people and were unhurt. The car was a write-off.

DUCK SHOOTING

In February 1932, Smithy, his wife and some friends spent two weeks on holiday in Merimbula during the course of which "he went out for ducks about Wallagoot but the birds, no doubt scenting a rival of the air, stepped on it in their best style, keeping well out of reach of the guns of the party. They returned with empty bags", commented the *Nowra Leader* of March 11th 1932.

BOMBALA 1932

In October 1932, however, he came down purely for business. On the 23rd, he landed at Bombala racecourse in the *Southern Cross*, accompanied by Captain Pat Hall in the *Southern Cross Midget*. The *Bombala Times* reported that, after a welcome by the mayor and the Returned Soldiers, "Sir Charles and his companions got to business, and bookings for seats and flights followed in quick succession". Both aircraft flew from 10.30 am until after 1 pm. "It is estimated, roughly," said the *Times*, "that the takings amounted to over £150. Sir Charles expressed himself as being highly delighted with the result. Out of 200 towns visited lately, it was said that Bombala showed the best financial result for a morning session."

And then it was on to Bega.

BEGA TAKES TO THE AIR

"BEGA TAKES TO THE AIR" was the headline in the *Bega District News* of Monday October 24th. The paper went on to report that "close on 2000 people" attended the landing of Kingsford Smith's two aircraft:

"Long before the appointed time for their arrival, the roads from Bega and outlying towns were crowded with all kinds of traffic making for Mr B Gowing's paddock to witness the landing." Mr Gowing's paddock was at Jellat Flat, about 7 km southeast of Bega and Kingsford Smith was possibly the first to use the paddock as an airstrip, as it was necessary to light a fire in the paddock so that the pilots could determine wind direction from the smoke of the fire. The lack of a windsock, a basic landing aid since the early days of flight, suggests that the paddock had not played host to aircraft before, at least not on any regular basis. The *District News* takes up the tale:

"At fifteen minutes past two the "Southern Cross Midget"



was sighted coming along the sky from the west...Captain Pat Hall landed his plane gracefully then came the "Southern Cross", all eyes being turned skywards to see the grand old bus and her skilled pilot. She looked great up there in the sunlight, cutting her way through the air and with pride that

was inspected from propellers to tail shaft. Shortly afterward, Inspector McIntosh, Trooper Abbott and Constable Pockett escorted the crowd back to a safety zone and the passenger flights commenced."



The Southern Cross at Jellat Flats. Photograph: State Library of NSW, FL1706302

large concourse of people must have watched for they all knew what Sir Charles and his companions in this plane had accomplished, battling through the elements time and again on their long flights and winning out to make a name for Australia that thrilled its people and the world."

Smithy brought the Southern Cross down for a perfect landing, says the District News. "The crowd thronged around to obtain a close view of the airman and the plane

COST OF RIDES

The Bombala Times informed its readers that the charge for a ride in the Southern Cross Midget was 5 shillings for adults and 2 shillings and sixpence for children. In the Southern Cross, adults paid 10 shillings and children 5 shillings. The average weekly wage for males in 1932, according to the Sydney Morning Herald, was £5 and for females, £2. The sum of 10 shillings, then, was a considerable outlay, representing a quarter of a woman's weekly earnings and a tenth of a man's. The Australian Bureau of Statistics' Average Weekly Earnings survey of 2016 gives a figure of \$1592, which would make the price of a flight with Smithy \$159 today – though no doubt, most of us would pay much more for the privilege,

if it was available. (Interestingly, joy flights from Merimbula airport today range from \$55 to \$85 – but without Smithy at the controls!)

SOUVENIR TICKETS

Those who flew with Smithy received souvenir tickets which featured a photographic portrait of Charles Kingsford-Smith, and a drawing of the Southern Cross with the words



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“Souvenir Flight in ‘Southern Cross’ piloted by C.E. Kingsford-Smith”. The *Bombala Times* noticed that “When No. 13 flight was due to begin, the tickets did not bear the supposed unlucky number ‘13’, but were marked 12a” and asked “Is ‘Smithy’ superstitious, or was he considering his passengers?” The *Times* concluded: “The next ticket was marked 14 so everything went merrily on.”

SMITHY’S EXPENSES

The *Bombala Times* remarked that “The fares, considering the big expense incurred, were very reasonable”. Commenting on the “big expense”, the *Times* explained that “With a staff of nine, it costs about £60 a day (says the *Bega District News*) before a passenger is taken on the big ‘ship’. Should you puncture a tyre—and that happens with the *Southern Cross* on an average once a month—all you have to do is to dip ‘down south’, bring to light £80, and you get a new one. Then there is benzine, oil, repairs, and a few etceteras to take care of. There would seem to be quite too much ‘dipping’ about the job for most of us.” (*Bombala Times* 28 October 1932, p.1)



The Southern Cross Midget at Jellat. Photograph: State Library of NSW, FL1671426

THE PASSENGERS

Despite the cost, there was no shortage of passengers. The *Bega District News* reported that “... Right up till 6 o’clock, both planes were kept hard at it to cope with the large number who wished to fly; it seemed that everyone had gone air-minded and wanted to experience the thrill of riding in this famous plane with the gallant airman at the controls.”

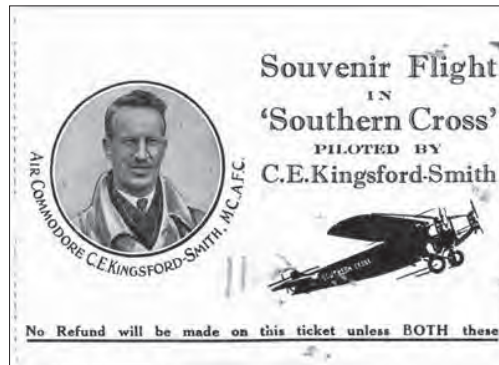
“Bega and surroundings from the air was certainly a pretty sight”, said the *News*.

UNCLE CLEM

Interestingly, according to the *News*, “There were more ladies and girls than men and boys in every flight ...”

Mr Peter Rogers of Bega told the author that his mother and her sister had been passengers and that his mother

had been “very scared” but had made the flight anyway. Mr Rogers’ uncle, who was unmarried and therefore, presumably, had more surplus cash, paid for the tickets. When Mr Rogers’ mother arrived home in the evening, her mother asked: “Who let you up in that contraption?” the reply was: “Uncle Clem”, who then “got the rounds of the kitchen from Gran”.



Above: Souvenir Ticket. Photograph: Federation University Australian Historical Collection, Object 20025

MONDAY FLIGHTS

The *News* suggested that if the planes had arrived in the morning, they would have had passengers all day and in fact, further flights were arranged for the next day, Monday. The *News* reported also that a number of people had travelled down from Cooma to Bombala, from where they flew to Bega in the *Southern Cross*.

SMITHY’S TAKINGS

The *Bombala Times* reported on Friday October 28th that the flights in Bega made £200 and the *Bega District News* claimed that this figure was “an Australasian record in takings in one day” and added “so that puts Bega and Bombala on the map”. The amount raised suggests that, at 10 shillings per flight, at least 400 people took the opportunity to fly. However, since flights in the *Southern Cross Midget* cost 5 shillings and children could fly for as little as 2 shillings and sixpence, the number of people who flew with either Smithy or Captain Hall was probably much higher. Bega did, indeed, take to the air.

After lunch on Monday, the planes took off for Gundagai. So Smithy flew out of Bega and out of the lives of the locals, who had flown with an Australian legend. Smithy flew on into history: he made the first commercial flight from Australia to New Zealand in 1933 and in 1934, he made the first eastward crossing of the Pacific to the US. Sadly, he disappeared over the Andaman Sea in 1935, attempting to break the England-Australia speed record.

THE LEGACY

The people of Bega and Bombala had had memorable experiences and most had flown for the first time. It is perhaps a coincidence that in 1937, Ad Astra Airways built the Shire’s first airfield at Frog’s Hollow and began commercial flights to Sydney. The *Bombala Times* remarked that “Many (especially, the young people) will remember for many a long day their morning’s outing with Kingsford Smith.” The fact that the story of Smithy’s visit still survives in local oral history suggests that they did. **R**

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Australian Dictionary of Biography at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/kingsford-smith-sir-charles-edward-6964>
Fitzsimmons, Peter, *Charles Kingsford Smith and Those Magnificent Men*, Harper Collins, Sydney, 2009.

The Bega Cemetery: More than Just a Burial Ground

by Fiona Firth

Cemeteries are places to bury the dead. They are also important as places to visit to remember loved ones. They hold community memory, and they reveal aspects of the social and cultural history of towns. Cemeteries also show how social customs, values and attitudes change over time.

The current Bega cemetery sits on an east facing slope at the southern entrance to town. This is the fourth cemetery in Bega. The earliest European burials were at Corridgeree and Tarraganda.

As the town of Bega grew in the 1850s there were calls for the cemetery to be moved closer to the town. In 1863 the Bega Cemetery was gazetted to be on the ground where the Bega High School now stands in Auckland Street. The gazettal came well after the site had been decided upon, as there was at least one burial at the site in 1857, another in 1858, and by 1861 roads had been laid out and trees planted. The cemetery's position at that time was on the southern boundary of the town.

In Victorian Britain, before about 1820, people were buried in the churchyard of their local parish church. As the populations in the cities increased during the industrial revolution, churchyard burial sites were filled, even overfilled. Burials in dedicated cemeteries, some owned by private companies, became fashionable.

There are no churchyard burials in Bega but there were divisions in Bega Cemetery, reflected in the layout of the graves, based on religion. The Auckland Street cemetery was sub-divided into Roman Catholic, Church of England, Presbyterian, Wesleyan/Methodist, Independent and 'Other Denominations' sections. Each denomination was responsible for its own area. The first edition of the Parish Map shows the areas allocated to each denomination.



The memorial in the Bega Cemetery to the four Ryan children who died from diphtheria in 1895 – James Thomas aged 8 years, William Patrick aged 3 years, Florence aged 5 years and Joseph aged 3 months.

The Auckland Street cemetery was used until the beginning of the twentieth century. There had been calls to move the cemetery from that site since the 1880s as understanding grew of the role of bacteria in the spread of illness. Bega was isolated in 1876 because of smallpox and there were outbreaks of cholera and

diphtheria over the years. Any seepage from the cemetery would have moved towards the river and people living in Bega at that time drew their water from wells; town water was not introduced into Bega until 1929.

The 'old cemetery' was supposedly closed in 1902 but burials continued there until the new cemetery was ready. Burials continued at Auckland Street until at least 1910.

The 'old cemetery' 'rested', or from some accounts, was abandoned between 1920 and the early 1940s. It was apparently a dark place, overgrown with large trees (or a wonderful playground depending on your age and point of view!). I have heard stories that people grazed livestock and dumped rubbish in the disused cemetery.

In 1937 one corner was excised to build a Department of Main Roads office – the current police station. About that time it was also decided that the existing cemetery area would be a good site for a High School and so the Bega Cemetery Act was proclaimed in 1943. There was general support from locals for removal of the cemetery because it was considered to be an eyesore.

Prior to building the high school a survey of the site was undertaken. 470 burials were recorded: Church of England: 250; Catholic: 124; Presbyterian: 41 and Methodist: 54

Later research estimated that there could have been up to 668 burials in the cemetery (based on population estimates). The burials include the remains of the majority

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of Bega people who died between 1857 and around 1910.

The Bega Cemetery Act 1943 allowed families to ask for the remains of their relatives to be removed to the 'new' cemetery. Very few families took up this offer. The removal of remains to the new cemetery was at the family's expense.



The grave of Dr Montague Evershed in the Bega Cemetery (see *Recollections* No. 7, April 2018). The inscription on the base appropriately reads "He lived not for himself but for others."

what is now the main school building were removed. In 1972 four lead caskets were moved when the science/library block was built. Several more graves were discovered in 2000.

Archaeologists and conservationists now consider it to be best practice to leave graves intact and build around or over them without disturbing them. When the High School gymnasium was planned and built in 2000 the builders and architects had to comply with conditions of Heritage Acts, the National Parks and Wildlife Act and the Bega Cemetery Act of 1943.

The current Bega Cemetery is located on the southern



Old gravestones moved from the old Bega Cemetery (now the site of the Bega High School) and re-positioned in the Bega Cemetery near the top of the hill at the southern entrance to the town.

approach to the town on the eastern side of the highway – you can see some of the monuments as you drive by. Land from the Bega Common was used. The site is on an east facing slope with the oldest graves at the top. The 'new' cemetery was gazetted in 1902 but there were no burials until 1905, and between then and about 1910 burials continued in both cemeteries – some people having a preference for the old cemetery, presumably because they already held plots or had relatives buried there.

The current cemetery shows how religious beliefs in the community have changed over time. The original plan shows the cemetery divided into sections based on religion (Roman Catholics, Church of England, Wesleyan, Methodist, Presbyterian, Jewish, Salvation Army and a small area named 'Unsectarian'). The original plan also shows an area set aside for a chapel which was never built. In 1902 there was an expectation that nearly everybody had a religion or a loyalty to a religious sect.

By the 1970s this had changed, and increasingly more people were buried in the 'general' areas. Today remains are buried in the general areas unless a specific request is made for the grave to be placed in a denominational area and a plot can be found in these for them.

Cemeteries have also adapted, with increasing numbers of people choosing cremation rather than burial. In Bega there is a columbarium – a wall with niches for ashes and a plaque on the front. Now memorial gardens are being built with spaces for the interment of ashes in the ground covered with small memorial stones and inscriptions. There are currently plans to put in new areas of lawn cemetery.

There are many family plots in the cemetery. The graves also show that spouses often wish to be buried together, so that burials together from different eras can be found. I discovered one example of a husband and wife buried side by side whose deaths were 50 years apart. And families often bought several or many adjacent plots.

People have also created memorials to people who were not buried in the cemetery. One example is the Ryan grave. This includes the names of four Ryan children who died within two weeks of one another in February 1895. But they cannot possibly be buried in this cemetery because the cemetery was not gazetted then; these children died of

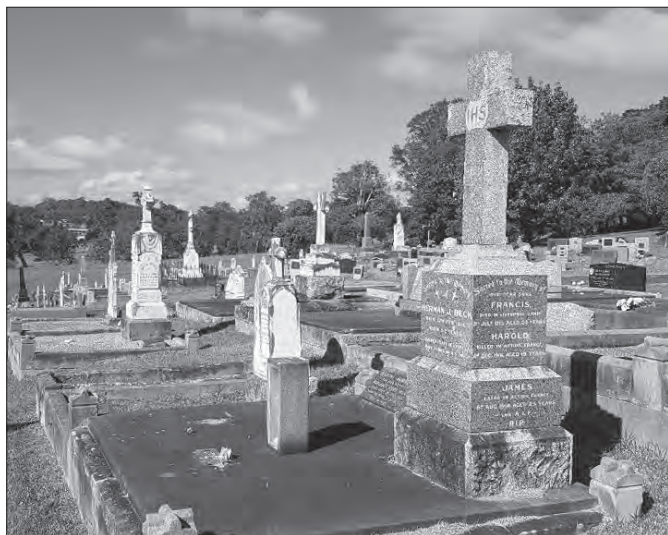
diphtheria and I assume that the parents, who were buried there in 1936, arranged for the plaque to be put there in 1932 when they buried another son.

There are other memorials to men who died in World War I in Europe on the graves of their parents – a superb example being the Beck grave.

Cemeteries are also great places to study local

demography. From the graves you can get an idea of what proportion of the community belonged to each religious denomination. In a country settled by immigrants you can also get an idea of where people came from, from reading the surnames and place of birth on the grave.

I did a small survey on age at death of people buried in Bega Cemetery and compared males and females, Roman Catholics and Church of England. This shows that, on average, women die later than men, but it also shows that



The Beck family memorial in the Bega Cemetery recording the loss of sons Francis, Harold and James whilst serving in the Australian army during World War I.

many women and men lived quite long lives in Bega Valley with many dying at over 75 years of age. Since these were people born in the 1850s in Europe, their graves demonstrate that the Bega Valley was a pretty good place to live to have a long life!

As people research their family history the details on gravestones can be a valuable source of information. There are now Apps that can be used to upload photos of gravestones using GPS data, and there are websites to search for existing photos and records.

People use the cemetery as a place to go to remember and to create lasting memorials to their loved ones. Before every Mothers' and Fathers' Day lots of visitors clean and put fresh flowers on graves. I even once heard one lady say to another 'I just came up here to see everybody'.

Remembering is obviously important. **R**

References:

Monumental inscriptions, known graves and war memorials in the Bega Valley Shire, 3 vols. In 1988 the Bega Valley Genealogical Society surveyed and recorded inscriptions on the monuments and gravestones in all the cemeteries in the Shire. These books of inscriptions are available from Shire Libraries. R929.5 MONU.

Graham Wilson and Peter Douglas, *Historical archaeological investigations in the stage one development area at Bega High School, Bega, NSW: a report on test excavation across the former 'other denominations' section of Bega General Cemetery, 1863–1902.* (Report prepared in 2002), held in Local History Collection Bega Library, R994.47 WILS LHC.

Map of the old cemetery, held at Bega Pioneers' Museum.



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'One of the Most Lovely Spots on Earth'

Corunna was never really a village. It was more of a small, rural community.

It never had a store. But it did have a post office (mail was transported from Wagonga [Narooma] twice weekly; it was closed in 1942), a school (when it opened it was a half-time school, the teacher also working part-time at Wagonga School; it closed briefly around 1920 because it attracted too few students; and it closed permanently around 1938 with its schoolroom then being relocated to Bermagui School), a dairy factory (which was built in 1893 and closed in 1923 after it had been condemned by government inspectors), a nearby sawmill (which operated successfully from mid-1905 through to January 1914 when it was 'totally destroyed by fire')...and – reflecting the priorities and values of the time – a Church.

This Church (a Wesleyan/Methodist Church) actually outlived the other community buildings in the neighbourhood. It was built in 1882 and was dedicated in early 1883. At one time it was the only Methodist Church between Moruya and Bega. It was used regularly until the mid to late-1950s and, then being in a state of disrepair, was demolished in the mid-1960s.

It had a frontage to the then Princes Highway and backed on to the western shore of Corunna Lake. The site was once described as 'one of the most lovely spots on earth.'

Adjacent to the Church was a small cemetery where parishioners and other locals were buried.

Over the years, local descendants have taken it upon themselves to maintain this cemetery – so it has survived during an era when other small, local cemeteries have often 'disappeared', simply because they have been 'forgotten'.

But it's recently been given a real makeover. A small community group, led by Tilba identity Harry Bate, first

thoroughly researched and documented the history and the heritage values of the Church and the cemetery, then successfully applied for a grant from 'Heritage Near Me' in the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage to restore what remains of the cemetery. They then conserved all the remaining graves, placed bronze plaques on all the identifiable gravesites that no longer have headstones, reinscribed any illegible or badly faded monuments, and erected interpretive signs at the site of the Church.





Their efforts were lavishly (and justifiably!) praised at a recent official 'celebration' of the cemetery restoration, with several knowledgeable speakers suggesting that this little cemetery is now one of the best-documented cemeteries in the state, and probably has the best on-site information display of any cemetery in NSW. The group's approach to the task and their ultimate achievements have also provided a 'best practice' template that other communities could now profitably use.


Information about the cemetery and its restoration is

Left: Two views of the cemetery showing some of the restored grave sites and monuments. Note the signboard in the background.

Above: Two of the interpretive signs on the signboard.

available at <http://www.mtdromedaryuc.org/corunna-cemetery.html> (If you do visit this website, please ensure that you also click on the link to the very comprehensive, very informative report that was prepared for 'Heritage Near Me' once the restoration project was completed).

Research suggests that 50+ people are buried in the cemetery. Photographs of many of them are displayed on the information board. However, only 16 gravesites remain clearly marked. These 16 contain the remains of 28 people – an indication of how easily and quickly significant local heritage and history can be 'lost' (in this case, over a period of less than 135 years), with graves that were only marked with wooden materials having apparently deteriorated and ultimately disappeared.

It has hoped that Eurobodalla Shire Council will soon produce a guide for those wishing to visit the Wagonga, Tilba, Corunna and other nearby historic cemeteries. 

Sources: *Tilba Times Revisited* by Laurelle Pacey, 2015; www.mtdromedaryuc.org/corunna-cemetery

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Robert Wallis Thatcher – Bega’s Builder

In its obituary to Robert Thatcher (1861–1948) the *Bega District News* (1.6.1948) described him as ‘one of the district’s fine old identities, who has left a monument to his name as a builder, in the many fine public buildings, churches and residences dotted around the district.’

Thatcher built, and in many cases designed, many of the buildings around Bega that were constructed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of these have survived to this day.

But he also worked in areas far removed from the South Coast. His grandson, Doug, lists ‘Bega district, Monaro, Braidwood, Bermagui, Cobargo, Tilba, Narooma, Bodalla, Moruya, Batemans Bay, Nowra, Sydney, Waverley, Bondi Junction and North Shore’ in a review of his grandfather’s work that was published in 2000.



Robert Wallace Thatcher with his wife and son, Lance Corporal S.R. Thatcher. Photograph: Manchester County Records Office 1857/12a.

Robert Thatcher was originally apprenticed in England as a shipbuilder or a joiner before emigrating to Australia – and Bega – at age 22. His first job in the town was to supervise the building of the Bank of New South Wales for the builder George Chidgey.

In 1888 he entered a partnership with a local builder, Robert Underhill, and the first major contract they were awarded was for the construction of the Bega Convent in 1891. Around 1900 they constructed the Courthouse and other buildings in Braidwood at the cost of £4,294, their biggest contract up to that time.

Other projects this partnership completed include the Cobargo Post Office (1890; Thatcher and his family relocated to Cobargo during the construction of this building), the Central Hotel in Bega (1894), St Mary’s Roman Catholic Church in Cobargo (1897), and the Pambula Court House (1897).

Thatcher himself designed and built a number of buildings on the Kameruka Estate (including the Kameruka Hall (1915), Kameruka Hostel (1914–15), Kameruka

Store and Offices (1917–18), and the Manager’s residence at the Island Factory (1922)), and the Grandstand at the Bega Racecourse (1933; he had previously built the earlier grandstand in Bega in 1896). He was also responsible for designing and building the Cobargo Convent (1917), Christ Church Cobargo (1923–24), the Delegate Commercial Hotel (1926–27), Christ Church in Bemboka (1929) and for remodelling the Bega Butter Factory in 1924.

Robert Thatcher and one of his sons, Arthur C. Thatcher, were responsible for the design and building of the Candelo Town Hall (1936) and Cobargo Hotel (1937–38). Robert Thatcher also designed the Bega Showground Agricultural Hall in 1903 that was built by Mr. W. Manning.

He designed and constructed many, often quite-modest houses, in and around Bega – a town that he once described as ‘the Queen City of the South’, and on whose Council he served as an alderman on several occasions. Many of these wooden and brick residences (which often were built by his son Arthur) are still standing.

The work for which he was most proud was the design and building of the Bega War Memorial (1923–24). At its unveiling it was noted that ‘Mr Thatcher had erected many structures, but this was his masterpiece.’ In some respects it must have held special significance for him because his son, Lance Corporal Sidney Rupert Thatcher, who was killed during an attack on the village of Doignies in France on 2nd April 1917, is one of 358 servicemen that this local monument honours.

Many of R. W. Thatcher’s designs can be classed as Federation Style, through to California Bungalow, and of the Inter-War

Period. Even though newspaper articles, advertisements and the foundation stone for Christ Church, Cobargo, refer to R.W. Thatcher as an ‘architect’, in reality he was no architect, but a more-than-competent draftsman and building designer.

The Bega Pioneers Museum now houses the original working plans of buildings he designed and built, and a collection of his tools of trade. They also have – as a sort of historical curiosity – his hand-written record of 96-dozen ‘Clothes pegs made by Hand from Gum Trees by R.W. Thatcher, 1939–45 War’ which notes the quantities supplied and the identities of the local families that purchased them. **R**

Sources: ‘Building designer: Mr Robert Wallis Thatcher’ by Doug Thatcher, 2000; ‘If the Walls Could Talk’ by Bega Valley Historical Society, 2005; documents held in the Bega Pioneers’ Museum (a listing of many of the public buildings designed and/or built by R.W. Thatcher is available on request from the Museum). Valuable assistance in preparing this item was also provided by historian Pat Raymond and by Ken Gordon, a building designer from Bega.

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Readers' Responses

Bob Weston of Wapengo wrote: 'I enjoyed reading the story of the Gypsies in the April edition. I grew up in Sutherland, which was Outback Sydney before, during and just after the War. A drive on a Sunday afternoon would surely bring you in contact with a caravan of Gypsies. The bonnet of the car would be up, the patriarch would have his head in the engine and one of his beautiful daughters, long plaits and all, would be crying, with tears, running down her cheeks, in total despair of the car ever moving again. One would daren't stop, perchance, the wheels, petrol, and anything else worth having, suddenly disappeared from your car.

Then there was old Sam, the Fruit and Vegies man. He always had two big baskets filled with goodies, one on each side of the single-entry door to his shop. I was walking past Sam's one morning when a couple of young Gypsy boys gave the over-filled basket of Mandarins a bit-extra tilt. As the Mandarins cascaded down the footpath, Sam was after them. Whilst Sam was retrieving his Mandarins, the rest of the Gypsy party was conducting a thorough search of his premises.

We didn't have TV in those days—but we did have plenty of entertainment!



Our June issue of '*Recollections*' included a photo of Mr Walker and his bullocks. The author of this article, Peter McCarthy, had indicated to us that he had been unable to ascertain Mr Walker's first name, but we've since discovered it was Edward. How? **The Old Courthouse Museum** in

Batemans Bay asked us for a copy of the photograph we reproduced, indicating they were researching his family's history. At the same time they were able to advise us that they had determined his name was Edward – so two researchers have benefitted from sharing resources.



And we've also discovered who wrote the poem '*Arch's Lament*' that was published in the February issue of '*Recollections*', thanks to information from **Beverley and Richard Day** of Newcastle. It was Ernie Greig who was born in Hurstville in 1892, was educated at Tanja School until age 10 when he left to work on the family farm in Wapengo. He enlisted in the AIF (Light Horse Division) in 1915, but following a severe bout of pneumonia, was discharged as being unfit for military service. In 1917 he started working on the Kameruka Estate, and in 1927 became its head gardener. He remained so for almost 40 years (during which time he must have written the poem about the Estate's Manager, Arch Dowie), before he and his wife (Eva [Mayes] of Wolumla, who he married in 1918) retired to Albury. He died there in 1990.

The family was unaware that seemingly he had earlier written a number of poems. They were discovered in his garden shed in several tobacco tins. Several specifically relate to the area surrounding Bega and contain references to local citizens. (If you'd like a copy of all these poems emailed to you, simply email us at southcoasthistory@yahoo.com.) Here's an untitled one (no attempt having been made to correct the spelling or grammar):



Who said that Bega is going dead
And the folks are all too slow
Why the poultry men are going to hold
A first-class poultry show.

First we have Bill Johnston
Jack Barbour and Wes Brown
They have the best white leghorns
That ever came to town.

Of course you all know Jimmy Hall
He must not be forgotten
He has some good white leghorns too
But his luck is simply rotten.

I am a sympathetic sort of chap
And I sort of feel for him
For someone always seems to have
A better bird than Jim.

Next we have Vic Henderson
From the Co'op Store
He'll show his big black Orpingtons
And bet your life he'll score.

But what price Billy Riley
He'll have good stuff you'll see
If he don't get some prizes
It's a funny thing to me.

Next there's Eddie Jaunsey
He'll be among the heads
He is a noted breeder
Of those Big Rhode Island Reds.

There's Greig and H.M. Blomfeld
They'll be looking through the flock
I've seen their names on tickets
On the good old Plymouth rocks.

Then there's Wilfred Whittle
From out at Wapingo
With half-doz different breeds
He is a great man for the show.

He lives a long way out of town
On a place they bought off Sprutz
Where he breeds some good W.L.H.
And some choice Colubrion Dots.

We also have young Pearce
I just forget his name
But I noticed at a previous show
He got first for Indian game.

There are lots of other breeders
Whose name I do not know
But you'll see them all on Saturday.
At the Bega Poultry Show.

One shilling will admit you
So be a sport and go
There'll be some birds worth seeing
At the Bega Poultry Show.

We'll have a judge from Sydney
And we'll learn a thing or two
About our hens and pullets
And our cock-a-doodle-doo.



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HISTORIES

Fighting the Kaiserreich, Australia's epic within the Great War

by Bruce Gaunson

This is a stupendous book by Bruce Gaunson, a Merimbula resident.

It's a book that, really, every Australian should read, considering the enormous impact that World War I had on Australia.

'*Fighting the Kaiserreich*' (or 'fighting the German empire') is particularly worthy because:

First, this is the first-ever book that combines a history of World War I with the story of the Australians in the war. That was an ambitious undertaking and, in general, Bruce has very successfully achieved what he set out to do. (Mind you, the research took the equivalent of about six years of full time work – which may explain why others had previously shied away from the challenge!)

Second, Bruce has presented many of the quite complex details of the war in an engaging, lively, easy-to-read way. For example, rather than constantly referring to "Germans" (as many books like this would do), he also refers to them less formally as "Fritz" – which, of course, is exactly how our Diggers on the Western Front described the enemy.

Third, Bruce has not shied away from including his opinions (based on evidence that he provides) throughout the book of the major players in World War I, of some previous histories of World War I, and he also fires a few broadsides at academics and "experts" when he considers they have simply got things wrong. For example, this is his (justifiable) description of General Sir Hubert Gough's handling of the awful Bullecourt battle in which thousands of Australians were needlessly killed or injured: "*Not war but madness*" truly defines Bullecourt ... at Bullecourt, the AIF's insane advance was ordered by Lieut. General

Gough ... He was off on a new irresponsible venture of his own, unrestrained by Haig ... yet Gough, blithely forgetting

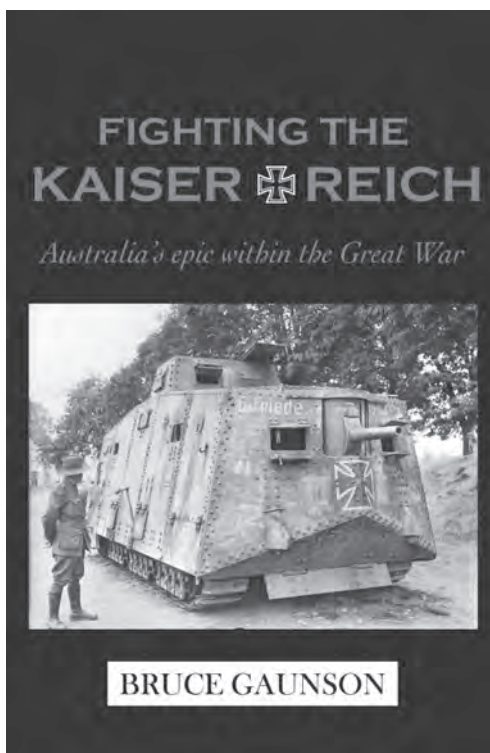
his Mouquet Farm blunder, sent the Diggers into murderous three-sided fire, without even the proper use of artillery to help them. The battle was such a "fundamental tactical error" that even Gough got around to admitting this, long after the war, to the British Official Historian ... At the end of that cold April day, when Death had stalked greedily among so many of Australia's finest, Gough sent the 4th Battalion a message. The attack had "been of great assistance", it said. But no-one believed him.' Bruce's well-supported opinions certainly add to the overall readability of the book!

Fourth – and most importantly – it contains a lot of new information, and outlooks on the war, that had not been previously presented.

Perhaps the most startling of these is the revelation of German pre-war plans to cripple Australia during the war and perhaps make the country a German colony after the war. These were not vague plans; these were detailed, well-reasoned strategies that

have only been uncovered in surviving German archives in recent years. They include very specific details about naval espionage conducted by German citizens in Australia, including the German Consuls in each state, that were indisputably contrary to Australia's national interests.

So, German pre-war plans posed a real, considerable threat to Australia. I wondered if Australia's leaders actually realised this, because conventional Australian history has, until now, been that Australia went into the war to support 'Mother England' and her Empire. And this is reflected in a speech by Prime Minister Joseph Cook on August 1st, 1914 when he said: "*Remember that when the Empire is at war,*



'*Fighting the Kaiserreich*' is available in paperback, is issued by Hybrid Publishers and is available from around \$30.



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so is Australia at war ... So far as the defences go here and now in Australia, I want to make it quite clear that all our resources in Australia are in the Empire and for the Empire and for the preservation and security of the Empire.”

I asked Bruce about this. He indicated that, despite Australian federal intelligence in the pre-war years being rather patchy, there was concern among defence-minded federal parliamentarians about Germany's presence to our north and the potential threat this posed to Australia. For example, in the 1880s the Queensland government had moved to annex the south-east of New Guinea, to prevent the Germans taking the region, but this was initially ruled by Britain to be inappropriate ... but, very soon thereafter, the message hit home to the British, and Papua was annexed. And, whilst there may have been suspicions that some Germans (particularly state Consuls and German shipping agents in all the main Australian ports) were gathering information about Australia, its shipping and defences, no specific evidence was produced at the time about Germans known to be spying.

As the war progressed, on several occasions Germany came within a cat's whisker of defeating the French and British Empire forces and, by January 1918, it had knocked Russia out of the war. Bruce reminds us: “We must remember that no-one knew how the war would unfold; at several points and as late as May 1918, the Germans looked like winners, and thoughtful Australians realised that if the Kaiserreich won, they could lose their freedoms.”

A victorious Germany might have concluded that its finest colonial prize would be Australia and New Zealand. Germany's yearning for imperial prestige, its dissatisfaction with its colonial leftovers, and its envy of Britain's empire in the South Seas, were well known. Crucially, no military invasion would have been required. Germany could have claimed

Australasia just as the victorious Allies confiscated German colonies in Africa, the Pacific and the New Guinea region. And leverage would not have been lacking. Vast numbers of Allied POWs (including the five Australian divisions and

New Zealand's) would have been one guarantee that French, British and Australasian authorities would accept the German peace terms ... and, no doubt, there would have been some 'penalty' for our forcible seizure of all sub-equator German colonies.

This is a sizable book (482 pages, plus notes, plus index) and this alone may – regrettably - discourage some people from buying or reading it. But much of its content is so exceptionally good that I now hope parts of it will appear in other formats – such as in journal articles, as monographs, on numerous websites – so they reach as many readers as possible.

The sections of the book that outline the German threats to Australia are but one example of the passages that should be reproduced elsewhere. Others include a lucid explanation of the causes of World War I; some amazing insights into the lead up to, and the execution of, the Gallipoli campaign (the question of whether the Anzacs landed in the wrong area on 25th April 1915 is even addressed, with the revelation that [and this is typical of much of this appallingly-planned campaign] ‘Hamilton [the Commander of the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force during the Gallipoli campaign] vaguely advised “somewhere” in a six mile stretch!’ and ‘orders to MacLagan's covering force (the first to land) said nothing about the landing location!’ so ‘the right beach is hard to pin down’); and the fascinating saga of the (primarily) Australian actions that commenced near Villers-Bretonneux on Anzac Day 1918 and eventually led to German capitulation and the end of the war on 11th November 1918.

Peter Lacey



An Australian recruitment poster playing on anti-German sentiment (Brisbane is re-named Bernhardiburg, Sydney is Nietcheburg, Melbourne is Zeppelinburg, Adelaide is Hindenburg, Perth is Tirpitzberg, and Tasmania is Kaisermania!).

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The Twelve O'Clock Whistle

by Barrie Wilford, with illustrations by Kevin Burns

Barrie describes 'The Twelve O'Clock Whistle' as 'a folk history of Milton Ulladulla.'

In case you are unfamiliar with the concept of 'folk history', this is how it has been described: *'It is a written record of the oral history you would tell your grandchildren. And if your next door neighbour was in some of the same battles as you were, I'd like to see his views of the battles, too. This oral tradition, if recorded, is the raw material historians can use; but, if it is not recorded, it may easily be lost forever.'*

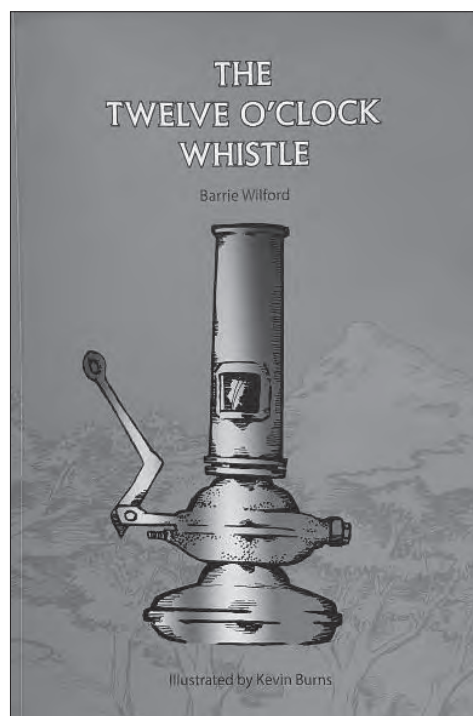
I immensely enjoyed reading Barrie's book – and wish more of us 'oldies' (especially; but there is no absolutely reason why this should be considered an activity solely for 'oldies!'), would also write folk histories. (And, yes, before you suggest it to me, I really should take my own advice!!) With computers, it is now such a simple thing to do. And companies such as Officeworks can then rapidly and very inexpensively print a small number of bound copies, if required (perhaps initially just for family, the local library and the local historical society) – turning each of those who venture down this valuable path into proud 'published authors'.

And why, then, did I like Barrie's book?

Barrie was born and was brought up in Milton-Ulladulla area, was a teacher at Milton Central School (now Milton Public School) in the mid-1960s, and *'couldn't think of any better place to return to for my retirement'*, so is very familiar with its history. I haven't lived in the area at all, and know nothing of its history. So reading Barrie's book was a journey of discovery for me. And a damn interesting journey that turned out to be!

The book mostly contains Barrie's recollections of the

1940s and the 1950s, along with a smattering of stories that he had heard from earlier times.



In the 1940s and 1950s the area had a population of around 2,000. Milton and Ulladulla were closely connected, with Milton being the commercial, cultural and heritage centre and Ulladulla being more industrial (a port, a centre for shipbuilding, fishing, the timber industry [the 'Twelve O'Clock Whistle' being at Mitchell Brothers' Timber Mill in

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Who Are We?

We're just a bunch of locals committed to sharing the fascinating history of the NSW South Coast with anyone and everyone who is interested — putting many of the dramatic old photographs of the area out on public display — learning what we can about region's history — helping uncover things from our past that we didn't previously know — and, along the way, hoping to enthuse others who have similar interests.

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on our Facebook page, at our informal 'talking history' morning teas, and at seminars we hold in the area from time-to-time.

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We're a local community-based, incorporated, not-for-profit organisation which simply aims to benefit our community. Our ABN is 42 492 574 578 – so we're legally established, with clearly-defined responsibilities. And we're also currently actively seeking funding to enable us to progress some other innovative local initiatives.

* Back issues of *Recollections* are at www.bit.ly/RecollectionsX. Insert the number of the issue instead of "X" (but for issue 3 insert 3-). Also note capital "R" is required.

Ulladulla, but its signal was heard throughout the district indicating it was time for all to down tools and take a lunch break; and the iconic steam whistle will one day 'take pride of place in the future Milton Ulladulla Museum', Barrie suggests], an ice works, a tannery, a bacon factory and quarrying.)

Milton was predominantly a farming centre – with dairy farms, crops of maize, sorghum and even sugar cane (with a mill being purchased before it was realised this would be an unviable venture!), and an ostrich farm (its owner 'being something of a promoter, put on demonstrations of feather plucking at Milton Show which fascinated the public.')

Oh, how things have changed over the past 70 years! A large part of the book simply describes everyday life in the 1940s and 1950s and Barrie reminds us, for example, that 240-volt electricity only arrived in Milton in 1948 which, for the first-time, enabled families to power a 'wireless' and to purchase an electric refrigerator to replace a meat safe or perhaps a kerosene-fuelled 'Silent Knight'; that 'there were hawkers who travelled around to farms and households selling goods from their vans. One of these was the Rawleigh's Man, selling medicated salves and ointments in highly decorated tins and jars, and various substances, many of which (like castor oil) are no longer considered suitable for human consumption or use'; that 'at the end of the war cast iron lead battleships were popular toys ... you could bite on them and leave tooth-marks ... girls seemed to enjoy playing "Jacks" with small knuckle bones taken from the feet of sheep. Local

butchers put aside the small bones as a gesture of goodwill towards their regular customers. In more recent times these bones were replaced by plastic mouldings made in the same shape'; 'In Milton there were two large general stores which sold everything from food to hardware. One of these stores was known as Mumford's (later Bedford's) ... the other was run by the Blackburn family. Both these stores used spring-loaded canisters to send cash and dockets along a wire to a cashier in a separate booth across the store. The money for the purchase was placed in the canister by the shop assistant who would pull on a handle and the mechanism would fly the canister across to the cashier. The cashier would then place any change required and the docket into the canister, pull on the handle and send it back to the shop assistant for the customer. The shop assistant did not have a cash register on the counter. These large general stores made delivery runs to Ulladulla, dropping off goods which were not available in the smaller stores in Ulladulla. The story is told that one of these stores sold a saddle to a local farmer on account, but lost the records relating to it. Saddles were quite expensive, so a request to pay statement was sent to every farmer until the bill was finally paid, hopefully by the actual purchaser.'

But, for me, perhaps the most interesting parts of this book were those describing the numerous local industries, now long gone: the local wattle-bark industry, the Ulladulla Tannery, the Milton Condensed Milk Factory ('there appeared to be a resistance [in Australia] to buying Australian made condensed milk and Roger Seccombe

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And Barrie is a JP, for those needing documents witnessed!



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eventually had to send it to Fiji to be canned and labelled and then brought back into Australia as an imported product', the Austral Starch Factory (on Currawan Creek, a tributary of the Clyde River, that extracted 'arrowroot' [starch] from the native Burrawang plant); Hoe and Daninick's Brewery (one newspaper praising its beer, assuring readers there was "no fear of committing suicide by its use"); gypsum, gold, tin and coal mining ('it was resolved that a company would be established to mine the deposits (of coal in the upper Clyde Gorge). The company would be given the rather grandiose name *The Great Southern Coal and Shale Company Limited* ... transport was a major problem. Access into the gorge was, and still is, very difficult. A stepped pathway was built and after half a ton of coal was mined it was hauled out in bags carried on the backs of two men renowned for their great physical strength. Jim and Joe Beadman carried the bags of coal up the cliff side, a height of 600ft (nearly 200 metres). From the top of the plateau the coal was then transported (probably to Ulladulla) by bullock wagon. The mine was never going

to be a paying proposition'); a brick and tile works; a bacon factory (Joel B Taylor, a young bacon curer 'applied in 1895 to the Ulladulla Municipal Council for a licence to slaughter pigs in Ulladulla ... in 1897 he applied for a licence to build slaughtering premises in the town of Ulladulla itself. This would have been in the vicinity of Burrill Street. In addition ... he was given permission to "build a drain along Burrill Street from the premises to the beachfront." This probably meant that the wastewater from dressing the carcasses flowed down through the drain into the harbour!'); etc.

I wonder if, in seventy years' time, the current commercial/industrial scene in Milton and Ulladulla will have changed again, as much as it has over the past seventy years, and whether somebody then will have recorded the scene today in a similarly-interesting folk history.

'The Twelve O'Clock Whistle' is available from the Milton Ulladulla Historical Society, PO Box 224, Milton NSW 2538 for \$27, including postage.

Peter Lacey

'History You Would Tell Your Grandchildren'

from 'The Twelve O'Clock Whistle'

'One morning "Soot", a much-loved black cat, was missing. The mystery was solved by a neighbour when he received his milk cans back from the factory. In the bottom of one was a black cat wrapped in cheesecloth. It seems he had left a partly-filled milk can covered with a piece of cheesecloth overnight. The cat apparently thirsty from a night of hunting, had decided to have a drink, lost its grip and was drowned. The factory returned the cat, but the milk was apparently not rejected.'

~~~

'Another local farmer received a complaint from the milk factory that there were tadpoles in the milk. The farmer replied, "Of course there would be tadpoles. The cows were drinking from the creek and there were certain to be tadpoles in that creek!"'

~~~

'At the corner outside the old original Milton Showground Pavilion, an elderly gentleman, Mr Anderson boiled water so that people could fill their teapots and billycans to make themselves a cup of tea. He used a copper laundry boiler supported on a three-legged stand. Below this he had an open wood fire burning continually throughout each show day. At one show, probably in 1948 or 1949, Mr Anderson had worked hard and just prior to morning tea his water was nicely on the boil.

During the fun with the dry ice one boy, without understanding

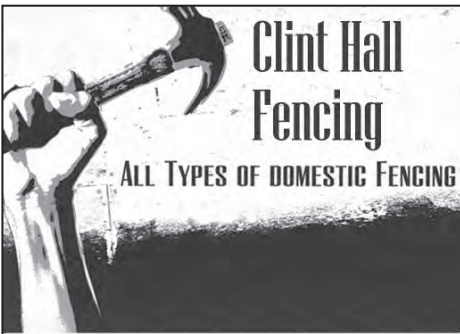
the consequences, lobbed a large lump of dry ice into Mr Anderson's boiling water and went on his way around the corner of the show pavilion. The results were quite spectacular. As the dry ice instantly evaporated, a giant gas bubble formed below the water. The water rose high in a geyser like mound and then cascaded down over the sides of the copper. The fire was totally extinguished and was nothing more than a smoking, steaming mess under the empty copper. A somewhat bewildered old gentleman was left with the difficult job of getting everything going again. I don't think he had any idea what had actually happened.'

~~~

When a young girl was bitten by a snake 'the good Doctor Ivimy applied ammonia to the wound, gave the girl a dose of ammonia to drink and, for good measure, injected some ammonia into one of her veins. By good luck she survived both the bite and the treatment.'

~~~

'A much more drastic, self-administered treatment that had been carried out by a young man seen travelling through Milton on the "service car" (an early bus service). He suspected that he had been bitten by a snake before leaving on his journey. To save his life he cut his own finger off and then bandaged his hand. By the time he reached Milton, obviously suffering a lot of pain, he was wondering if he had actually been bitten by a snake at all!' **R**



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'The best boys I have ever met in my life were the Australians'

by Brian Harris, Curator of Moruya Museum

The Moruya & District Historical Society, like many other local historical societies and museums, has an extensive collection of items relating to World War I and from the World War I era. Many are quite personal items, but they are now especially important because they reflect the enormous impact that World War I had on Australia and on the local community. These objects are fascinating in themselves – an identity disc, an embroidered Christmas card, a darned sock – and are invaluable when used to help piece together the complicated jigsaw of a soldier's life.



Trooper Fred Hutchings, c. 1916. Photo: MDHS Collection.

The first pieces of what was to prove to be a challenging but fascinating jigsaw arrived at Moruya & District Historical Society in 1976 in the form of small boxes, full of what museums call 'paper-based objects' that were donated to the society following the death of Herbert Frederick (Fred) Hutchings of Bodalla. Photographs, postcards, letters, leave passes and a personal war diary had been carefully stored in old cigarette tins as souvenirs of an extraordinary time in Fred's life.

These objects and documents proved to be far more than the minutiae of Fred Hutchings's experiences during World War I. These intriguing pieces of the jigsaw – a letter written on lurid pink paper, a sepia photograph of a Sultan's funeral, small postcards from Egypt, and a tiny photograph

of an attractive woman - all combined as primary sources to provide insights that allowed us to flesh out our knowledge of Fred Hutchings the soldier, 'Hutch' the mate, and 'Mr Hutchings' the close friend.

Thanks to modern technology, it was relatively easy to complete the section of the jigsaw dealing with Fred Hutchings's life as a soldier. By accessing full military records through the National Archives of Australia and the Australian War Memorial sites, a picture soon emerged telling us about enlistment, battles, bravery and in Fred's case, long periods of sickness. [see article below]

The section of the jigsaw about Fred, the close friend was more difficult - but ultimately extremely satisfying. The first piece of the section was a small sepia photograph found in an envelope addressed to Spr H. F. Hutchings and sent by a C. Yoshpé. The photo was of a young woman looking directly at the camera while sitting on a bentwood-style chair in a grove of trees.

The next find was a set of personal letters written to Fred by a Cicilé Yoshpé. These are particularly intriguing and tell us a lot about 'Mr Hutchings', the personal friend. The letters were written between January 1918 and March 1919 on single sheets of lined paper that were folded in half to resemble a book. The first page of each letter is written on

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the 'front cover'; pages 2 and 3 are written as columns inside the 'book', while page 4 is on the 'back cover'.

A letter written to Fred from 'Orangerie' on 2nd March 1918 was the first piece of Fred's jigsaw. Cicilié writes about her hopes for the end of the war, or, in her words *'when we will say no war now! finish war!'* This letter also provided us with a clue about the location of the Orangerie when Cicilié writes *'Our oranges are very green and bitter yet only in two or three weeks they will be really eatable and we will send some to you at your address'*. By using the Field Squadron, Australian Engineers Unit Diary and Fred's war diary it was obvious that the pair met in January 1918 when Fred's squadron was based at Wadi Hanein, a settlement of Russian Jews near Jaffa, Palestine.

Wadi Hanein with its orange groves and vineyards must have seemed like an oasis to Fred after the extreme climate of the Jordan Valley. As Cicilié wrote, settlers welcomed the advancing Allied forces as *'our deliverers from the horror of Turkish misrule'*. The friendship was mutual. As war historian Henry Gullett recorded *'for more than four years the men in the ranks were denied all touch with their own people or, in fact, any civilized white society, apart from the occupants of the Jewish villages'*. After the war Cicilié wrote *'But I will tell you the truth of mine mind [sic], that the best boys that I have ever met in my life were the Australian. I would like to go to Australia, I would like to see the country that produces such interesting people.'*

The second letter in the set helped solve more of the jigsaw while illustrating the close relationship between the two. In a letter written on 30th January 1919 Cicilié writes *'there is no need to apologise for any seemingly unmanliness on your part. Circumstances are not to be helped very often, therefore the apology from you is not necessary.'*

We will never know what form this 'unmanliness' took. It may have been fear of being sent back to the front. Perhaps Fred was ashamed that he had spent the greater part of 1918 in hospital at Port Said with dysentery while his mates were fighting. He could have been apologising for something far more personal. We will never know. What we do know is the letter is testament to the close friendships that were quickly forged during the war.

In March 1919 Cicilié was writing from Tel Aviv. As she writes about new dresses and parties, her joy that the war is over is obvious. *'But, sorry to say the girls are jealous, the boys are kind, and I was happy ...'*

Cicilié's intelligence, confidence and obvious affection towards Fred are apparent when she writes: *"I see, you are smiling and you repeat again, the old saying: "Vanity incomparable! ..." Well, what do you want? "Our cleverness is*

in our beauty, and your beauty is in your cleverness!"

Cicilié finished her last known letter to Fred by telling him to cheer up and by hoping that she could say "Goodbye" in Australia. This was not to be. Along with many of the Yoshpé family, Cicilié emigrated to the United States in the early 1930s and later married in Manhattan in 1934.


For his part, Fred arrived back in Australia in early 1920, and lived a very quiet life in Bodalla until he died in 1976, never marrying. Cicilié's letters, envelopes and photographs were treasured for 57 years as precious mementos of a special time in his life.

At this stage a clear picture of both Fred and Cicilié had emerged. By using primary sources – Unit diaries, Fred's war diary, his own photographs and letters – Fred Hutchings' section of the jigsaw was nearly complete. But who exactly was this mysterious Cicilié Yoshpé?

Sheer luck, the historian's best friend, stepped in at this stage. The letters were mentioned at a dinner and visitors to the area instantly recognised the surname Yoshpé. Emails and Facebook confirmed the assumptions that had been made after research, particularly on ancestry.com. Cicilié Yoshpé was a Jewish woman of Russian extraction and the Yoshpé family was one of

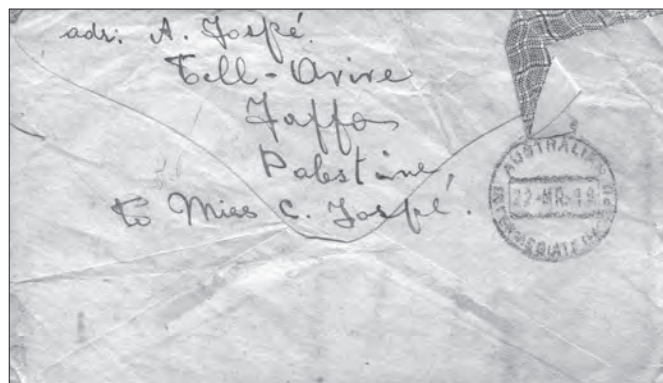
many Jewish families who fled Czarist Russia following the pogroms of the early 1900s.

Earlier this year I had the privilege of emailing a copy of the photograph of the young Cicilié Yoshpé, taken a century ago, to David Yoshpé in Tel Aviv, Israel. The photo was of his great aunt. David was then able to give his father, Cicilié's nephew, a copy of the photograph. He was overwhelmed.

All of the objects that were stored so carefully by Fred are now part of the Fred Hutchings collection at the Moruya & District Historical Society. Objects can be viewed at the Society or accessed at any time by visiting our online collection on eHive. (www.ehive.com/collections/5495) 



Cicilié Yoshpé, c. 1918. Photo: MDHS Collection.



Fred treasured this envelope from Jaffa, Palestine. Photo: MDHS Collection.

Trooper Herbert Frederick Hutchings

He was not persuaded to enlist.

'It was the duty of any able bodied man to do so.'

by Brian Harris, Curator of Moruya Museum

Eminent World War 1 historian Henry Gullett could have been writing about Bergalia-born Trooper Herbert Frederick (Fred) Hutchings when describing the men of the Light Horse Brigade in Volume VII of *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*. Age 27, 6'1" tall, weighing 160lb and with a chest measurement of 41", Fred certainly surpassed the requirements for enlistment in the Australian Infantry Force (AIF) in 1915. A natural leader, Fred was captain of the Bergalia Rifle Club, a talented local cricketer, and he had represented rural workers at hearings of the NSW Wages Board. At a farewell arranged by the local Recruitment Association it was predicted that he would return a hero with a DCM, if not a VC.

This was not to be. After 4 years and 105 days of service, spent in Egypt, the Sinai and Palestine in the 6th Light Horse Brigade and then the 1st Field Squadron Engineers, Fred Hutchings returned to a largely apathetic community. Like so many other returned soldiers, Fred's life had been interrupted and his potential never reached.

Fred was born on 18th June 1888 at Bergalia, a small community near Moruya NSW. He was one of the eight children, five girls and three boys, of Charles and Mary Hutchings. Charles Hutchings, a farmer and manager of the local cheese factory, had been born in England as were all

four of Fred's grandparents. The family had strong ties to 'Mother England'. Fred grew up in a home where education and literature were highly valued. Periodicals such as the *Boys Own Paper*, with their strong moral and imperial values were staples of the young Fred's life.

Fred Hutchings' decision to enlist in late 1915 was influenced by his family background with its very 'British' values, reinforced by strong community feelings for 'King and Country' and public attitudes that hardened as news of the devastating Gallipoli campaign spread.

By late 1915, in support of the government's recruitment drive, the *Moruya Examiner* regularly published articles with a strong anti-German, pro-enlistment bias. Headlines compared the blackberry menace to ruthless Germans. Another stated that Lemnos was more attractive than Bega. These articles, along with highly emotive letters describing 'the indescribable atrocities perpetuated in Belgium' and 'the Lusitania smash' helped form public attitudes towards the war.

At one of his farewells Fred said that 'he had not volunteered because he liked fighting, or because he thought that it would be pleasant to live like a wombat in holes and trenches. He was not out of work, nor had he been persuaded to enlist. He was going because he felt it was the duty of every



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able bodied man to do so’.

Following enlistment on 12th October 1916 into 15th Reinforcements 6th Light Horse Regiment (6LHR), a NSW regiment recruited exclusively from NSW and identified by the wallaby puggaree on their slouch hats, Fred was sent to a training camp at Casula and was there when the Liverpool Riot of February 1916 began.

Fred, along with 103 men of the 6LHR 15th Reinforcements, left Sydney on HMAT A4 *Pera* at noon on 22nd March 1916 as part of Convoy 18. After sailing past Montague Island on 23rd March 1916, Fred wrote in his diary about seeing ‘*a lot of familiar coast*’ and ‘*the old Dromedary*’. He had no way of knowing that he wouldn’t return for nearly 4 years.



Signallers, 6th Light Horse Regiment. Photo: MDHS Collection.

After a voyage marked by a memorable ‘Crossing the Equator’ ceremony, Fred disembarked at Suez on 21st April 1916. A train, ‘*a very slow affair*’, took him to the Tel el Kebir training camp where he was ‘taken on strength’ into the newly formed 2nd Light Horse Training Regiment. Memorialized in many diaries as ‘*a rotten place*’ and ‘*the worst place on God’s Earth*’, Tel el Kebir was a vast encampment 30 miles west of the Suez Canal, protecting the canal while providing an ideal training ground. Soldiers expressed frustration with endless ‘*Foot work morning, mounted afternoon*’. At the same time Fred appreciated the ‘*abundance of tucker, cigarettes, free tram or boat rides, little work and a horse to ride*’.

Fred was transferred into the 6 LHR on 4th August 1916, coinciding with the Turkish push towards Romani. He wrote ‘*I got a rifle and bandolier today for the first time since arriving*’. He also inscribed ‘*Sinai 4-8-16*’ on a cartridge. The 6 LHR was part of the 2nd Light Horse Brigade, which, along with two other brigades and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles Brigade, became the Anzac Mounted Division, part of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) under Lieutenant General Archibald Murray. Their task was to ensure Allied victory over the Ottoman Turks. Murray’s strategy was to advance across the Sinai, building infrastructure to support the troops as they pushed the Ottomans northwards.

Following success at Romani on 4th August 1916 the EEF marched eastward, driving the Turkish army back. On 15th August Fred was one of forty-one reinforcements, or the ‘*Lost Brigade*’ as Fred called them, who marched into camp

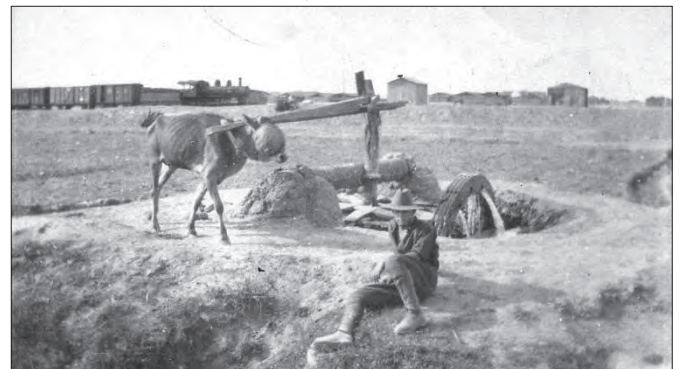
at Bir et Maler where the 6 LHR was resting after the Battle of Romani. The Ottomans had retreated to the outpost of Bir el Mazar where, on 17th September Chauvel’s forces attacked, initially unsuccessfully. This was Fred’s first real battle. His opinion of the ‘stunt’ illustrates the irreverent attitude of Australian soldiers towards their superiors and their strategies. ‘*We take Abdul by surprise, introduce ourselves, and run away ...*’

October and early November were spent ‘in reserve’ at Hill 70 and records show ‘Troop Drill & Rifle Exercises’. Troops recorded time spent playing football and taking leave to Alexandria and Port Said, where Fred spent a week, spending 10/- for a room at the Imperial Hotel. These times were real respites from extremes of temperature, brackish water and flies.

The 6LHR then spent a number of months following Murray’s strategy of forcing the Ottomans to retreat from the Sinai into Palestine. Following victories at Magdhaba and then Rafa on 9th January 1917, Murray planned to crush the enemy before they could retreat by attacking Gaza on 26th March 1917. This battle was a significant loss for the EEF. After a transfer in June 1917, Fred became 2188 Sapper Hutchings in the 1st Field Squadron Engineers, Anzac Mounted Division at Abbassan el Kebir, Palestine. This squadron played a critical role, in particular by ensuring water supplies for the Allied front crossing the desert terrain of Palestine.

After ‘*a severe contact on the shin with the extremity of a horse’s leg*’ at Tel el Marakel on 15th August 1917 Fred was taken to the 65 Clearing Station, transferred to the Infected Subcutaneous Tissue (ICT) ward of the 24 Staging Hospital at Rafa, taken by hospital train to Cairo and finally admitted into the 14A General Hospital, Abbassia on 19th August. He was a patient in the hospital for 72 days until 30th October 1917 during which time he photographed the funeral procession of Sultan Hussein Kemal in Cairo. Fred also wrote a letter to the *Moruya Examiner* stating that the Crusaders had taken a fancy to Palestine while ‘*the old biblical celebrities did some mighty wonders too*’. Fred rejoined his company at Esdud, where after victory at Beersheeba, the EEF now under General Allenby began the march northwards to fulfill the promise to Lloyd George to take Jerusalem by Christmas 1917.

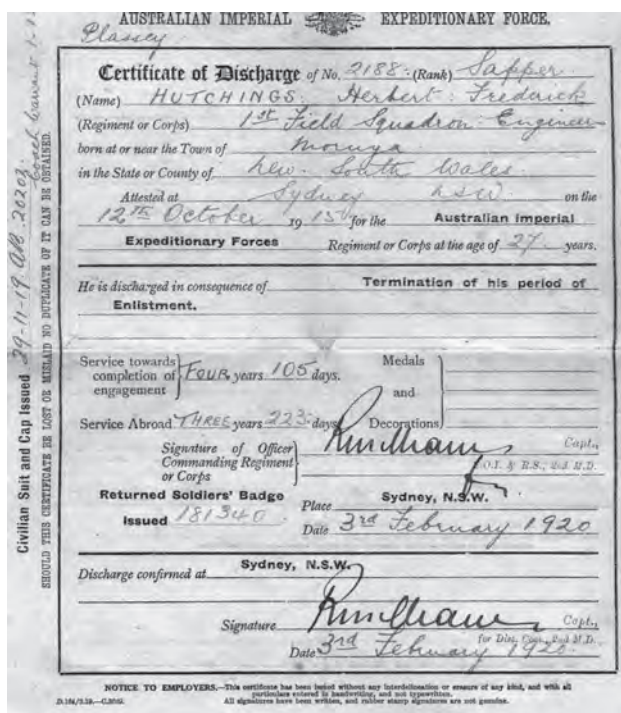
At the same time the EEF celebrated this success, the population of Moruya was divided over the 1917



Sapper Fred Hutchings sitting at ‘Pump 1 of 50’, 1917. Photo: MDHS Collection.

conscription referendum, mainly on sectarian grounds. A significant proportion of the large Irish-Catholic population was against conscription into the 'King's War', particularly following the 1916 Dublin Uprising. Patriotism, so evident in 1915, gave way to violence following pro-conscription meetings, 'posses of police' protected public speakers and ultimately editorial support in the *Moruya Examiner* for the NO campaign. The local result of the referendum was 75.58% NO, significantly higher than the state or commonwealth NO vote of 58.84% and 53.79% respectively.

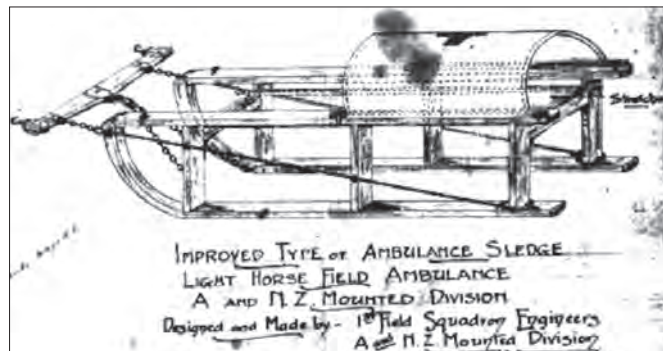
at Port Said; one of 245 patients admitted that day, mostly men from the Jordan Valley stricken with dysentery. He was still in hospital on 11th November 1918 when news of the armistice arrived. A fellow soldier at Port Said described the 'unparalleled' scenes where *'At sunrise on Tuesday morning the sirens off the boats, the whistles from the trains, and the church bells started an unearthly row, and kept it up for hours, and again that evening.'*



Fred Hutchings' Certificate of Discharge, 1920. Photo: MDHS Collection.

Early in 1918, following victory at Jericho and battles at Es Salt and Amman, the EEF moved into the Jordan Valley. A highlight of this period was time spent at Wadi Hanein, a Jewish settlement in an area of fertile and productive agricultural land that provided a welcome respite from the harsh desert environment. It was here that Fred met Cicilié Yoshpé, a Russian-Jewish woman who made a deep impression on Fred. [see article above]

On 11th May Fred was admitted to 14A General Hospital



Drawing of Ambulance Sledge, 1st Field Squadron Engineers. Photo: MDHS Collection.

Following his discharge on 25th January 1919, Fred rejoined 1st Field Squadron Engineers before entering duty at AIF Headquarters, Cairo on 3rd March, at the time of the Egyptian Uprising. By August Fred was *'living on caged grub and military promises'* at the Anzac Hostel in Cairo and working in the Engineer's Repair Depot.

After demobilization, Fred embarked on the HT *Plassy* from Port Said on 20th September 1919 and disembarked at Woolloomooloo on 30th October 1919, after three years and 105 days overseas. After spending January looking for viable Soldier Settlement blocks, Fred was discharged on 3rd February 1920.

Fred Hutchings returned to an apathetic community. The RSL found it difficult to form a branch and there were only 8 people at a meeting in 1923 about building a public memorial. He didn't return a hero, but as a taciturn, capable man with engineering and carpentry skills that he used throughout his life. His 1943 appointment as a Lieutenant in the 14th Battalion in the Volunteer Defence Corps was a highlight of a very quiet life, spent in Bodalla amongst his machines and the treasured, highly polished souvenirs, letters and memories of the time he did 'his duty'. **R**

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