

Bundanoon History Group

Monthly Newsletter

July 2020



From the President

Hello everyone. *Lets start with the good news* – the BHG Committee voted unanimously to hold our 3rd August Members' Meeting. Numbers are limited and places are filling up fast, more on this in the column opposite.

Archive Team – the team are continually active: digitization of items in the collection; following up public enquiries; following up DA application for 18 Hill St, Warrigal subdivision; and providing support to the Heritage Signs project and the Bushfires Archive project.

Bushfire Archive Project – 18 Oral History interviews have been conducted so far, as well as collecting a wealth of photos and articles related to the fires. Francesca Beddie and Jim Rooney have also applied for a grant from the NSW Oral History Society to enlist the help of an expert in oral history and bushfire research in formulating the 2nd phase of the project.

Upcoming Events – Ralph Clark and his team have been discussing options on what we can do under Covid-19. The bad news is there will be no coach tours planned for the rest of 2020. We are however looking at the possibility of a self-drive outing in October, and a BBQ in the Morton Park at the end of August. We will keep you posted.

Contents of this Newsletter – As we struggle with the pandemic and how life will be afterwards, I have included two pieces that are a tribute to our human resilience. I discovered the first story in the current Sydney Living Museums exhibition, about the remarkable

journey of 9 year old Lennie Gwyther. Long before the time of social media and mobile phones, Lennie travelled alone with his pony from rural Victoria via Canberra and Goulburn to Sydney, (almost 1000 kilometers), to see the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932.

The second story, extracted from the *Bowral Free Press* newspaper, dates back to March 1884. It's about a gentleman who survived after going missing in the Bundanoon Gullies for 19 days.

Finally we have a story on the mysterious gun in the BHG Collection.

Best wishes and keep well, David

Email: david.brennen@yahoo.com

Tel: 0432 608 47

Update on Members' Meeting – 3rd August, 10 am

Harvey Grennan - ex Sydney Morning Herald journalist is our guest speaker at the Bundanoon Social Club on Monday.

Covid-19 makes it necessary for us all to follow a few safety protocols at the meeting. There is a strict imposed limit of a maximum of 40 people to attend, and everyone must adhere to the government restrictions regarding social distancing. To ensure compliance, there will be two BHG / Club members acting as Covid-19 Marshalls to:

- Meet & Greet you and ask if you are feeling well
- Request you use hand sanitiser before

entering the club

- Ask Members to complete the Covid-19 Patron Details Sheet or use QR Code
- Ask Non-Members to complete the sign in sheet and the Covid-19 Patron Details Sheet
- Ensure the pens we use are held aside for disinfecting. Disinfect pens when able to do so (or bring your own pen)
- Monitor that numbers in designated areas are not breached and ensure those waiting to enter do not breach the 1.5m rule
- Ensure those waiting at the bar or using the ATM do not breach the 1.5m rule

Your understanding and co-operation on the above is most appreciated. Remember also to bring your own cups. Wrapped biscuits will be provided.

Since we are limited to 40 attendees, please add your name to the registration list, by calling Graham on 4883 7714 or email: morgan_gt1@yahoo.com.au

Lennie Gwyther's journey

The following is taken from the current exhibition at the Museum of Sydney "On the Move". The exhibition runs from July – October 2020 and is perfect for the grandkids. By today's standards the prose is somewhat sentimental but this true story is inspiring and ends up with a statue of which everyone can be proud.

Author: Charlotte Roberts Project Officer, SLM

Born in the early 1920s, Lennie spent his childhood running around the foothills of Leongatha in country Victoria with his four younger siblings and his prize-winning pony, Ginger Mick.

A hard little worker, he spent holidays and Saturdays helping at the family's farm, and took over the ploughing of 24 fields when his father broke a leg. Despite Lennie's considerable

responsibilities and solid work ethic, he had dreams – dreams that he nurtured with as much gusto as his farm work.

Lennie grew up in 'the decade of change' and was in awe of the progress happening around the world. In January 1932, he learnt that the Sydney Harbour Bridge would soon be opening. He was obsessed with machinery and engineering, and dreamed of attending the opening ceremony. The Sydney Harbour Bridge was an engineering marvel and, at that time, the largest single-span bridge in the world. Lennie was only a small boy and his dream was very big, but his hard work at the farm paid off. His parents – even his mother, despite her reservations – agreed that he and Ginger Mick, though they were both only nine years old, could go to Sydney alone with only their wits to guide them. Off they went to see the bridge upon its completion and celebrate with locals.

The pair set off in February, with 600 miles of terrain to cover over a long seven weeks of trotting towards Lennie's dream. And Lennie's dream, as he found out, was a far bigger undertaking than he could have imagined. The journey became a great adventure with challenges throughout including travelling through bushfires at Traralgon.



Farm boy Lennie Gwyther on his journey to Sydney for the opening of the Harbour Bridge. (Supplied: Leongatha Chamber Of Commerce)

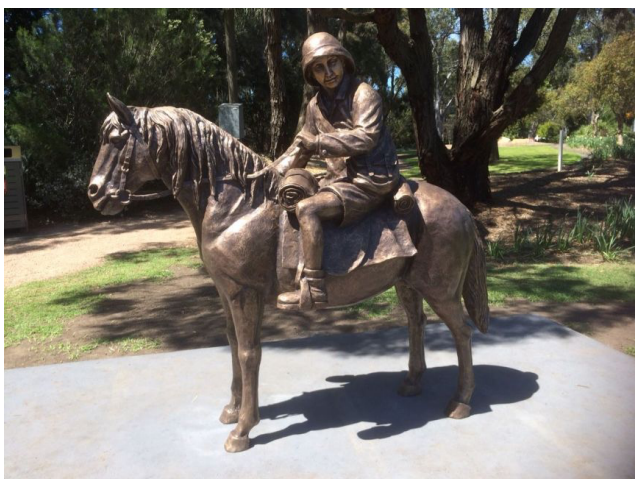
He then went on to Orbost, Cann River, Bombala and Canberra, where he met the Prime Minister of the day Joseph Lyons.

Lennie and his pony then rode onto Goulburn and through to Sydney, mobbed by well-wishers along the roadside, offering food and lodgings.

After The Sydney Morning Herald published an interview with Lennie, he inadvertently found celebrity. On Saturday 19 March 1932, Lennie's dream was realised with an additional treat: much to his surprise, he was asked to participate on the opening parade. But this was only the beginning. After the ceremony, he met the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Sir Samuel Walder, had tea with the Prime Minister, and rode an elephant at Taronga Zoo!

Lennie had arranged to catch a boat home from Sydney, but he was having such a good time that he managed to convince his father to let him ride back as well. When boy and pony returned to their little corner of the world in the foothills of Leongatha, four months after their departure, it was forever changed from the town they had known. Lennie and Ginger Mick were greeted by a civic reception attended by 800 people, keen to welcome them and celebrate their outrageous achievement.

When Lennie grew up he became an engineer at General Motors' Holden plant at Fisherman's Bend, and his passion for machinery would shape the rest of his life.

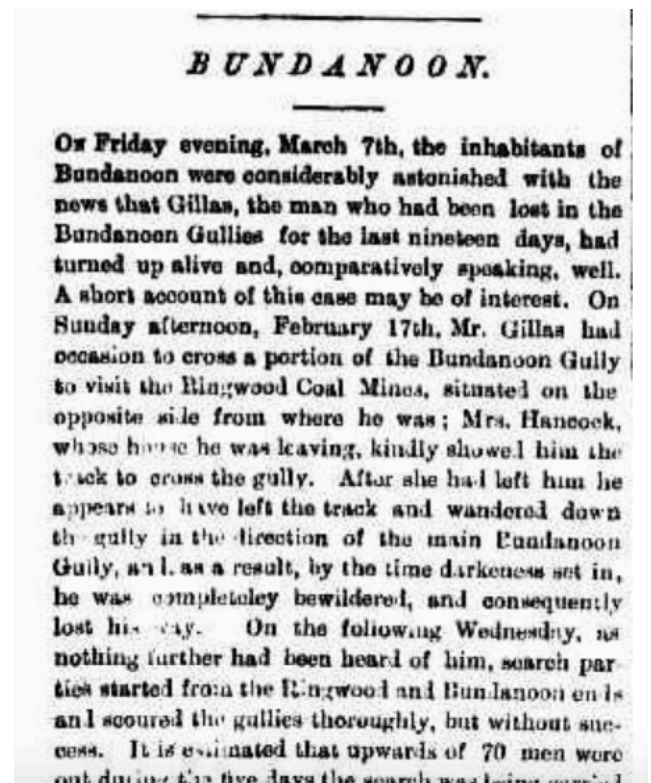


The Leongatha community fundraised for months to generate enough money to go ahead with the bronze statue installation. (ABC Gippsland: Rachael Lucas)

In 2017, the local community of Leongatha, led by Lennie's sister and daughter, came together to raise funds for a statue commemorating the town's famous adventurers.

Bundanoon News from March 1884

It's always nice to catch up on the news. Here's the actual extract from the **Bowral Free Press (NSW : 1884)**, Saturday 22 March 1884, page 3. Below it is a more readable typescript.



Extract from the Bowral Free Press, courtesy of Trove

"On Friday evening, March 7th, the inhabitants of Bundanoon were considerably astonished with the news that Gillas, the man who had been lost in the Bundanoon Gullies for the last nineteen days, had turned up alive and, comparatively speaking, well. A short account of this case may be of interest.

On Sunday afternoon, February 17th, Mr. Gillas had occasion to cross a portion of the Bundanoon Gully to visit the Ringwood Coal Mines, situated on the opposite side from where he was. Mrs Hancock, whose house he was leaving, kindly showed him the track to

cross the gully. After she had left him, he appears to have left the track and wandered down the gully in the direction of the main Bundanoon Gully, and, as a result, by the time darkness set in, he was completely bewildered and consequently lost his way. On the following Wednesday, as nothing further had been heard of him, search parties started from the Ringwood and Bundanoon ends and scoured the gullies thoroughly, but without success. It is estimated that upwards of 70 men were out during the five days the search was being carried on, and the greatest credit is due to the men who left their various employments to look for the man known to be lost. No one who has not been in the bottom of the gullies can form any idea of the tremendously rough nature of the country. While the search was being carried on, Gillas had got out of the gully on the further side from Bundanoon where, if anything, he was worse off, being away from water, and with little or no chance of being found. He heard the noises of the search party, but as he was upwards of five or six hundred-foot above them, he could not make himself heard. After wandering about for fourteen or fifteen days, on one occasion without water for three days, he laid down in a cave to die, but providentially a large lizard came within his reach, which he secured, and which doubtless, gave him sufficient strength to make another attempt to scale the rocks—this time with success. After a day's hard climbing he got out of the gully at a place known as the "Wide Rope" (from the fact that an attempt had been made, some years ago, to get timber out of the Bundanoon Creek at that spot.) Following an old track from there he reached the house of Mr. David McLean, where, for the first time in 20 days, he saw a human face. As a natural consequence of being so long without food the poor fellow was in a pitiable condition, and from the fact that he lost his boots the fifth day after he was lost, his foot

were in a dreadful condition, the unfortunate man being forced to tear portions of his trousers to tie round them. At McLean's he received the greatest kindness, and everything that was possible was done for him by Mrs. McLean and the neighbours. On the following morning, Saturday, Gillas was taken by train to Meryla Platform, and thence home to Sutton Forest in a buggy, by Mr. John Mc Williams. On Sunday and Monday following, Gillas was very unwell, but latest news says he is recovering fast. Gillas, before his adventure, was a stout man, but when found he had fallen away almost to a skeleton, and without doubt he could not have lasted much longer. As it is, the fact of his being lost in the bush for twenty days under the circumstances, is almost without parallel.

Our little village presented quite a lively appearance on Saturday last, 15th instant, the occasion being the annual picnic of our public school hero. The children, to the number of seventy or eighty, marched with flags flying to the scene of the day's amusement—Mr. Grice's paddock—and, without doubt, it would be hard to find a better behaved lot of youngsters—their healthy well-dressed appearance speaking volumes for the prosperity of the district. During the afternoon a heavy shower of rain marred the sports for a while, but in spite of all, the children, parents, and friends thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Great credit is due to our schoolmaster, Mr. Lovell, for the praiseworthy manner in which he worked the affair up.

The diamond drill, under the charge of Messrs F. Thonier and G. Gullifor, is doing good work at "The O Chimney," a spot about five miles from Bundanoon, near Paddy's River. As those gentlemen were successful in striking a five-foot seam close to the railway line at the Barren Ground, it is to be hoped their efforts will again be crowned with success."

March 20, 1884

Appeal for new Committee Members

It will be a big loss to lose Jewel Hillier from our BHG Committee, as she and Ken are moving to Bowral. And with Helen's move to Tasmania, we will have two Committee vacancies, which we urgently need to fill. We welcome anyone who would like to join the Committee, or manage the Rosters for morning tea and the Old Goods Shed. Please give it some thought, it really is fun and rewarding. Please contact myself or any other member of the Committee if you are interested.

The BHG Collection – Rifle and Case

Just in case you see the BHG President walking through Bundanoon with a gun under his arm.

Some months ago, we discovered in the BHG Storage a rifle housed in a leather case. At the time since little was known of both items and given current NSW legal limitations on possessing firearms we questioned whether we should be holding them at all.

Ian Smith (Archive Team) conducted a forensic research of both items and it seems likely the rifle belonged to Alec Cameron - previously a very active BHG member who may in the distant past have just left it with the BHG. Here are Ian's findings:

The Rifle Case is in poor condition and has the inscription *Presented to M. Pratt Bundanoon by the Rifle Club Dec. 1932.*



Bundanoon Rifle Club was established on 15 September 1925. Matthew Thomas Pratt was considered the driving force behind the Club's formation. At a meeting to form the Club he was elected as club Captain, a position he held continually until 1932.

The case was presented to Mr. Pratt on 21 December 1932 as a farewell gift from the rifle club. He was the station master at Bundanoon from 1925 to the end of 1932 and was transferring to the Menangle railway station.

The Scrutineer and Berrima and District Press [Saturday 7 January 1933 p. 2] reported that at his farewell function he was presented with "....a leather rifle cover (suitably inscribed) from the local rifle club." There was no mention of Mr Pratt being presented with a rifle.

The Rifle is a break-barrel air gun manufactured by the Shanghai Air Gun Factory, China. They commenced operation in 1957 and exported large numbers of its rifles across the world (see <http://www.airrifle-china.com/>).



In conclusion - given that the case was presented to Mr. Pratt in 1932 and the Shanghai Air Gun Factory did not commence until 1957, we can safely assume there is no historical connection between the two items.

We have therefore decided to hand the rifle to the NSW police, which is why you may see me walking through Bundanoon, on my way to the Police Station, to deposit the said weapon. We will however be keeping the leather case.