

# The Bega Pioneer

*Voice of the Bega Valley Historical Society Inc.*



*PHOTO from Kevin Tetley's collection*

September 2019 Edition

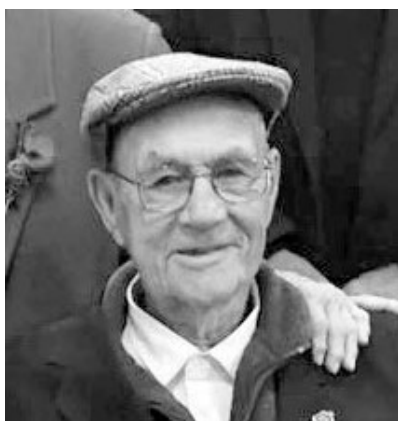


# MUSEUM NEWS

## IN MEMORIAM

### **Ronald Edward Stafford.**

Ron was a long time supporter and member of the Society. He passed away on August 6th after a long illness. The society extends its condolences to his wife Doreen and his family.



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### **Richard (Dick) Roberts.**

Dick was a member of the Society for many years. He attended meetings and events even when his health and mobility were beginning to fail. Our sympathy is extended to his wife Rita and his family.



## New Volunteers

The Society welcomes two new volunteers.

Roslyn Kirby whom many of you may remember from the Post Office started with us two weeks ago.

Christine Patterson is starting next week.

## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new Carlene Winch

*Have You Changed your  
Email Address?*



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# *Sleeper Cutting*

by Ron Stafford

Sleeper cutting was a major source of employment on the Far South Coast for over half a century. In the decades 1960-70 however, the trade had dwindled to almost a dribble, possibly due to lack of suitable stands of timber being available to cut sleepers from, and alternative employment being available to timber cutters in the wood-chip business.

It would be a fair comment to say the golden years of sleeper cutting would be during the depression years of the 1930s. It was during this era that timber workers from Victoria came to the South Coast of New South Wales to join with local workers in the sleeper cutting industry. Wood stands of hardwood were readily available from local forests, and there being no quota system, cutters could earn acceptable incomes by working long hours. Cutters had to have a licence issued by the Forestry Commission to whom they payed royalty per sleeper cut. The cutter also had to pay to have the sleepers carted from the forest to the dump, which was usually adjacent to the wharves at Eden, Merimbula, Tathra and Bermagui. Each month or five weeks there would be sleeper pass where an inspector from the N.S.W. Railways would come to the appropriate dump, and inspect all sleepers before payment was presented to the cutters. It was not uncommon for some sleepers to be rejected, but there was usually a ready demand for reject sleepers by the public for fence posts etc.

Larrge quantities of sleepers were exported to New Zealand, and among ships to load sleepers at Tathra were S.S. "Abel Tasman", the "Kaorie", and a larger ship named the "Port Waikato". During the golden years of sleeper cutting, the cutter's tool kit comprised crosscut saw, hammer and wedges, broad axe, a bar, and his gauge and string line. In later years mechanisation took some of the toil from the business with the introduction of chain saws, and some cutters built up circular saws for the sawing of sleepers. The famous old army blitz wagon also was an asset for winching logs from steep gullies and slopes.



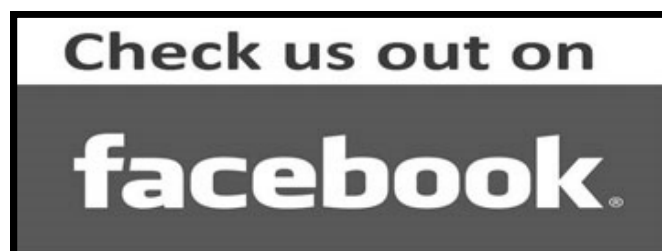
## *Sleeper Cutting* by Ron Stafford

Mr Joe Caddey, who has just retired from the N.S.W. Forestry Commission, and was in fact a professional bushman and sleeper cutter, has quoted the following statistics. One man could produce, on average, seven to eight sleepers per day, and a perfect-sized tree was one which would produce about thirty sleepers. Mr Caddey said the largest tree he felled during his sleeper cutting career was a Black Butt in the forest known as the "Desert" in the Wallagoot Lake district. This tree produced over one hundred sleepers, but he does not claim this as a record, because his late father, Joe Caddey Senior, had talked of forest giants that produced up to one hundred and fifty sleepers. These huge trees had to be worked by a gang of cutters, being too large for one man to handle, because the diameter of the tree at ground level could be almost six feet.

When the steamer trade to the Far South Coast of N.S.W. finished in the early 1950s, the sleeper cutting industry rapidly declined because the Government Railways would only purchase sleepers on a delivered to railhead basis, which meant cutters had to deliver their sleepers to Bombala or Bomaderry railheads, and this of course was not economical. There was of course a lesser demand from the coal-mining industry.

Several species of hardwood timber were used for sleepers, and in order of quality Iron Bark was first, followed by Red Gum, Box, Woolly Butt, Black Butt, and Stringy Bark. In New Zealand the railways are now treating soft-woods for use as sleepers and maybe the Australian railway system may think likewise. It is apparent that our stands of matured hardwoods are being harvested faster than they can regenerate.

Substitutes for railway sleepers have been carried out, and reinforced concrete and steel were among the experiments, but as far as is known the hardwood sleeper still predominates. Sleepers for the Government Railways are still cut in large quantities from western river Red Gums, and also on the North Coast of N.S.W.



**We still have many photos needing identification.**

# Teaching Swimming.

*from Bega District News Monday 15th January 1945*

The junction, the well-known bathing pool below the town, was the scene of great activity on Saturday, Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, when two young ladies from the N.S.W. Amateur Swimming Association, Misses Channon and Simmons, gave instruction in swimming to about 85 children. With the Mayor and Mayoress and the town clerk, the "news" editor visited the scene on Tuesday morning. None of the children could swim a stroke before the instructions, and it was remarkable to see how, after such a short course, they could Flanagan, swim. A start was made by teaching them to float, then dog paddle, and finally to use the crawl stroke. The following gained proficiency certificates for distances from 15 to 35 yards, and they were very proud too get the certificates, which were nicely printed: - John Deacon, Kathleen Woods, Lorna Grant, Keith Beresford, Russell Wood, Isabel Pender, Dorothy Kydd, Margaret Flanagan, Mary Harris, Norma Deacon, Henry Deacon, Nola Fourter, Dorothy Connell, John Rheinberger, Cecile Wakeling, Lawrence Hergenhan, Arthur Pascall, June Pender, Ron Cooper, Barbara Taylor, Kevin Watson, Peter Hayes, Norma Luff, Ailsa Cazneau, Joan Woods, Mary Foley, Dawn Smith, Jean Ubrihien, Nedra Armstrong, Rhonda Smith, John Millard, Joan Brunton, Bert Watson, John Baird, Peter Rheinberger, Michael Guthrey, Eddie Koellner, Ted Whales.

The children who did not gain certificates were all able to swim a few yards, Miss Channon was very pleased with the results and especially at the regular attendances, which she said was the best they had on the coast. Miss Channon is on the staff of Manly High School and has given up her holidays to carry out these classes, while Miss Simmons is a clerk in a city office. They are not paid for their services. On off times here they were taken to the butter factory, Errina cheese factory, to Mr Ubrihien's dairy and to Tathra, while they also went to the dance at Brogo on Monday night. The swimming classes, which were sponsored by Bega Council, were a great success, and the Town Clerk, Mr Laws, gave a lot of time to the organising.



# Publications for Sale

Bismark House	\$20
Bega District Band	\$5
Bega High - 50 years	\$5
Bega Primary 1860-2010	\$10
They Made this Valley Home	\$25
Illawarra Steam Ship Company	\$25
Remembering Bega Valley Serviceman of WWI	\$20



*Bega Valley Historical Society Inc.*

*Incorporating*

*Bega Pioneers' Museum*

*Committee*

President:	Peter Rogers
Secretary:	Kaye Jauncey
Treasurer :	Helen Jauncey
Research Officer:	Margaret Sly
Committee Members:	
Doug Russell	Aly Walsh
Bill Fletcher	Cheryl Moon

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**MUSEUM OPENING HOURS:**

Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10am to 4pm

Saturday 10am to 2pm

*The Society's Newsletter is published quarterly and is free to all members and to kindred societies.*

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**d a t e s to REMEMBER**



**BLACKA REUNION**

*Cobargo Showgrounds 9th -13th April 2020*

*Contact: Kirsty Blacka  
[blackafamily1@hotmail.com](mailto:blackafamily1@hotmail.com)*

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