

# The Bega Pioneer

*Voice of the Bega Valley Historical Society Inc.*

September 2022 Edition



# Bega Valley Historical Society Inc.

*Incorporating*

## Bega Pioneers' Museum

*87 Bega Street, Bega NSW 2550*

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### COMMITTEE:

President: Helen Jauncey      Secretary: Kaye Jauncey  
Treasurer Helen Jauncey      Research Officer: Margaret Sly  
  
Brett Bowyer, Reg Huntington, Bill Fletcher, Peter Rogers,  
Shirley Sproates

### MUSEUM OPENING HOURS:

*Monday, Wednesday and Friday 10am to 2pm  
Saturday 10am to 2pm*

*Museum Entrance Fees:  
Adults \$10, Seniors and Pensioners \$5, Children \$3  
Annual Membership Fee: Ask at desk*

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

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and are not necessarily those of the Bega Valley Historical Society Inc. The Society cannot accept any responsibility for any action taken as a result of the statements herein. Copyright: Bega Valley Historical Society Inc. If you are unable to visit us at the Museum please contact us, we will be only too happy to help with any queries that you may have. We have an extensive collection of family histories, photographs and memorabilia as well as a vast collection of files, books and journals relating to the Bega Valley and its inhabitants. Our research officer is only too willing to help you with your enquiry.

Front Page: Stoney Creek Public School and residence



# Museum News

**AGM  
HELD SATURDAY JULY 30TH  
AT THE BEGA PIONEERS' MUSEUM.**

The new committee is  
President/Treasurer Helen Jauncey.

Secretary Kaye Jauncey

Committee Peter Rogers, Shirley Sproates, Brett Bowyer, Bill Fletcher, Reg Huntington.

The committee extends there appreciation to Peter Rogers who has stepped down as president after many years in the position. Thank you also to Aly Walsh and Doug Russell who served on the committee for many years.

Welcome to Helen as the new president.

## **Bega Valley Historical Society Treasurers report 2022**

At 30 June the Society had cash of \$50,821.87. The reduction from the previous year is mainly due to the costs involved with the purchase of the building.

Income is only slightly down on the previous year due to the CHART grant and donations. What is of particular concern is the drop in museum takings. While the Museum had four weeks of free entry this was partly offset with an increase in donations. Research income being down – everyone did their family trees during covid in 2021. Expenses were up significantly with some one off costs contributing partly to the increase. CHART – offset by the grant.

Utilities – Part of the Council Rates was moved out to Waste Disposal. When added back to the Gas, Electricity, Rates the total is \$3,224.58, an increase of \$385.71 – after the purchase of the Building the Council recalculated the rates due for the last quarter.

The Society spent \$5,300 on building design and consultant for the grant submission for the extension and upgrade. Printing and Stationery were up due mainly to the purchase of protective binders for the newspaper collection. This, however, was partially offset by a donation to cover that expense.

Repairs and maintenance are up as the Society now employs a gardener to mow and trim the lawns.

Software – 2021 included the upgrade to Mosaic.

Overall while the loss for 2022 is significant – after the deduction of the one-off expense for the extension grant the loss is \$2,548.22 which can be explained by the employment of a gardener, the newspaper project and the increase in rates.

## **Presidents Welcome.**

As the newly appointed President I would like to thank our membership for your ongoing support. Like all other businesses and community organisations we have seen a significant decrease in visitors and income over the last 3-4 years and look forward to a better year this year.

As the new owners we are facing significant challenges to repair and maintain the building given its age and neglect over the years. While we have applied for grants to renovate the building there are minor works that could be done and if anyone has the time we would appreciate your help. I look forward to hearing from and seeing you at the museum.

Helen Jauncey

## MUSEUM DOINGS. NEWSPAPERS.

The conserving of the newspapers that were received by the museum when the Bega District News office closed has been completed. Thank you to Shirley Sproates for the hours she put in to this task and to Office Choice for the materials used.



*The Committee and Friends of*

*The Eden Killer Whale Museum*

*cordially invite you to the*

*Official Opening of the Extensions to  
the Museum*

*by Hon. Kristy McBain MP*

*10am Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2022*



*Refreshments will be served afterwards,*

*Please R.S.V.P to the Eden Killer Whale Museum Office by  
30th of September 2022*

*By email: [promo@killerwhalemuseum.com.au](mailto:promo@killerwhalemuseum.com.au)*

*By phone: 02 6496 2094*

### Editorial.

Winter and Covid have led to a downturn in visitor numbers. Grants that have been applied for:

- Seniors week 2023 tours.
- Repair works to the museum.
- Engaging the older population

Refurbishment of the original Post office desk is being undertaken by the woodies.

### Membership.

The membership data base is being reviewed.

The renewals will now be done on a yearly basis with reminders being sent on January 1st each year.

A follow up reminder will be sent in February for those who have not renewed and anyone who has not paid by March will no longer be a member.

### GREAT NEWS FOR THOSE ON THE SAPPHIRE COAST.

Several of the most highly acclaimed history-based movies are being shown in coming months at the Picture Show Man in Merimbula - and admission is FREE.

These screenings have been organized by South Coast History Society publishers of the widely-read Recollections magazine using a grant from the NSW Government and Bega Valley Shire Council

The first movie, which will be screened at 10am on Monday 17th October, is The Kings Speech. It received an Oscar for the Best Motion Picture of the Year in 2011 and Colin Firth also received an Oscar for Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role for his portrayal in this film of King George VI who was battling to overcome a debilitating stammer.

This will be followed, on Monday 7th November with Schindlers List which also received an Academy Award for Best Motion Picture.

The historical context of each movie will be explained in a very short introduction by South Coast History Society that precedes its screening.

It would be appreciated if you would alert your members and supporters many of whom we are sure, will be interested to these free movies. No bookings are necessary. Just turn up at The Picture Show Man ten or fifteen minutes before the movie starts. You then also have time to grab some popcorn or a choc-top! The only exception to this is if one of the wheelchair accessible places in the cinema needs to be reserved, we should be contacted as early as possible on 0448 160 852.

### Tanja Slide Night

November 5th at the Tanja Hall commencing at 4pm.

The Tanja slides left to the Bega Pioneers Museum by Kevin Tetley will be shown with narration by Peter Ubrihien.

Some recordings/reminiscences by some Tanja locals will be played. Afternoon tea and a pizza supper will be provided by the Tanja Hall Committee.

Cost \$10 per head.

Please RSVP for catering purposes to [museum25@tpg.com.au](mailto:museum25@tpg.com.au)

- **REMINISCENSES OF WWII - The Far South Coast and southern Tablelands of NSW.**

**Author: Peter Rogers in reply to a research request we received.**

My memory is still very good at 87 years of age. I was only 4-1/2 when WWII broke out in September 1939. My first encounter was at the breakfast table in Bombala, where my father ran the town electricity supply. My mother and father were talking about the Blitz which Britain was undergoing. I didn't know anything about wars or blitzkriegs so I asked what they were discussing. Normally children didn't get included much in adult conversation but they explained it to me then.

My attention thereafter was gripped by the war news delivered by the ABC by radio from 2FC Sydney. This wasn't easy, but all we had. No static free FM radio then. Bega had a radio station (2BE) but not a powerful one and couldn't be received in Bombala, only 50 miles away but shielded by a mountain range. The ABC didn't build a transmitter at Bega until after the War was well over.

The next interesting thing that occurred shortly after, was the Returned Soldiers League decided that Australia should have a "Home Guard" patterned on the British "Dad's Army" to defend our own shores, even though at the time, the threat was half a world away from us. In July 1940 it was commenced and rapidly filled with volunteers, even as our other young men were volunteering for the 2nd AIF to go overseas to help stem German-Italian domination of Europe.

This was important, though modest step in our defences, as Australia had no standing army up until WWII, it had a militia of part time volunteers called the "Light Horse" sanctioned by the Commonwealth as well as a few permanent artillery men for the odd ceremonial occasions to fire salutes, as well as the quite numerous and enthusiastic horse mounted "Light Horse", our part time soldiers who also paraded on ceremonial occasions. The Light Horse had no trouble recruiting volunteers, especially in country areas where horsemen abounded, there were also Government sanctioned Rifle Clubs in many areas, which were also well supported to give training and completion in marksmanship, which has the aim of having a source of defenders if ever needed.

Our RSL sponsored Home Guard was called the Volunteer Defence Corps or VDC for short. It was to consist of old soldiers from the First War and now too old to join the 2nd Australian Imperial Force who volunteered and accepted service outside our country. It also accepted youth too young to join the AIF as well as persons who had occupations which were considered too vital to the country to allow service in the AIF but who still wished to do their bit. My father fitted into this.

Veterans formed the core. They no arms, they were not a Government sanctioned body, so in the early days they made themselves wooden guns to drill with (ludicrous though that may seem). They had no uniforms, indeed had no right to even wear an official army uniform. The British Home Guard which had official sanction armed them with whatever they had, museum weapons, muzzle loaders, even pitchforks and sickles. Gradually as arms from the USA arrived in Britain and with accelerated local production, they became better equipped. It is probably little known even now but using ingenuity with anti-tank obstacles, flame throwing petrol pumps in secret locations, they would have formed a formidable defensive force. They were determined to defend their Islands.

So were our volunteers as ready as they could be with pea-rifles and shot-guns for those few that owned one. There is every reason to think we would have been every bit as innovative if it came to the crunch. Bottles filled petrol and a wick in the top known as a "Molotov cocktail" were prepared for action against tanks by the British Home Guard and we were going to do the same.

My father was equally enthusiastic and went to Bombala Showground every Sunday morning to drill for several hours with their wooden weapons. Spectators would gather, some with interest, many to laugh and deride their efforts.

As 1940 drew to a close and our AIF were fighting the Italians and the Germans in the middle east, and as France and its formidable army collapsed before the Germans to sign a separate peace, the British Empire, weakened by years of neglect of its armed forces, now found itself alone.

The Commonwealth Government assumed control of the half- amateur VDC and ratified its existence in 1941 and made it a part of the Armed Services. They began to arm it with early model .303 rifles stored from the first war, a bit later, even a few machine guns began to be issued as well as military uniforms. Instead of just weekends longer term camps were arranged. Tactics were taught and exercises carried out. Although as it was lower on the priority list strength was first limited to 50,000 under the Commonwealth Government but due the enthusiasm of the population, this was oversubscribed almost overnight and the Government increased it to 80,000, then later 100,000.

NSW had 33 battalions, about 700 men at full strength, and Queensland had 23. A Company is about 100 men and small units within that are platoons (about 30 men). A platoon is the smallest unit normally commanded by a Commissioned Officer (lieutenant)

The 15th battalion was centered on our area. Lt. Colonel T E W ("Will") Irwin MC, veteran of WWI and the Gallipoli Landing was appointed commander of the 15th battalion, VDC for the far South Coast and Southern Tablelands. Companies within that group were centered on various towns and the Company HQ was in the old drill hall in Gipps Street, Bega (at present used by the Boy Scouts). Battalion HQ was also here being Colonel Irwin home town.

Around late 1943 Col. Irwin became incapacitated and resigned his command. He was replaced by LT. Col. T.C. "Paddy" Walcott, a grazier of Bombala. Col Irwin after the War was confined to a wheelchair. I was introduced to him when in my twenties and it was an honour indeed. Hero, Patriot and Gentleman his eventual death was greatly mourned.

Bombala had its own Company situated in the main Street in an old general store that had failed financially just prior to the War. Roomy, it had space for large quantities of explosives, ammunition and arms to form a safe reserve for equipping the coast forces if need be. I remember my father proudly showing me Bren Guns (machine guns), Lewis Guns (ditto), even the old horse carried machine gun used by the Light Horse called a Hotchkiss. Heavier weapons such as the Vickers Maxim, and Trench Mortars firing a small bomb were also there. I remember the Company Commander and Battalion Quartermaster, Captain Bert Irvin, a farmer at Bibbenluke and an old soldier of the WWI, telling me "that there is enough explosive to blow Bombala completely off the Map in those sheds!" The civilian population who had no family members at the front were jolted out of their slumber when men who were not judged to be in essential services began to be conscripted into a full time army or "militia". While they could not be sent on overseas service (unless they volunteered) they were compelled to serve in Australian mainland only. This home service only rule was later broken when the invasion of New Guinea made the situation so desperate that PM John Curtin sent the Militia to the Kokoda Trail, and this turned the tide for us. The realization that a partner now to Italy and Germany, namely Japan, was becoming less and less friendly and more threatening to our hitherto isolation from conflict. Rationing of Butter, Meat, Sugar and Tea was introduced to the Australian population and of course Petrol. An ordinary private car or van was restricted to 4 gallons per month, carriers, farmers and other essential services got more for ploughing and food production, carrying goods etc.

Gas producers that used heated charcoal began to be attached to cars. These produced Carbon Monoxide gas, which after you got your engine started on petrol, was enough to keep it going on the gas but at much reduced power. It also didn't do your engine much good in prolonged use and my father opted not to use it but to put up with rationing. He did get a permit to buy a small 2 stroke motor-cycle to use in keeping the electric plant and servicing the town going. The local doctor, also a VDC man, was going buy a horse and sulky but after seeing my father's little motor cycle bought one the same - having get a permit to do so, showing need of course. Civilians took First Aid course. Women, including my mother, took heavy vehicle driving instruction so that they could be drivers for the armed forces in the event of emergency. My mother finished the course, driving like a professional, crash gearbox and all. Even blackout drills were carried out in major centres and a volunteer Warden Service instituted to enforce it.

I remember being taken by my mother to the Showground one evening to see a demonstration of how to deal with incendiary bombs which might be used against us. I was puzzled by the instruction "On no account pour water on one." How you dealt with them was, "Just have buckets of sand to smother them," The power house even had a couple of sand buckets issued to it and believe it or not, a wooden shovel to scoop the bomb up and carried it outside. Funny now but real then. It was only later when I went to High School in Bega that I learned why you never try to extinguish one using water! It burns so hot it splits the oxygen from the hydrogen in the water. The hydrogen is highly explosive and the oxygen make it burn fiercer so that steel shovels will simply melt but a wooden one will last long enough to get the burning outside if you are lucky! With hind sight, a small town like Bombala had nothing much to fear from bombing, but... still ...tell that too many little villages in Europe where that DID happen!

Precautions were introduced as the Japanese threat increased. Hong Kong, Vietnam, Burma, Malaya, the American controlled Philippines; all fell as did the British fortress island of Singapore. The Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia, went easily.

Australia, now allied with the United States, became a base for the Americans. The Population generally was almost resigned to an invasion here. We had a huge coastline to defend, an impossible task. On the Far South Coast it was almost a given that they land on a sparsely occupied coast. Indeed I remember some years ago someone showing me a photo he took at Nelsons, an inlet just north of Tathra, showing a surfaced Japanese submarine, rising sun flag flying, with the crew taking turns having a swim alongside. How I wish I had managed to get copy for our museum! Or even know who it was took the photo. Probably long departed the scene now but I certainly saw it with my own eyes. Tathra had a Volunteer Air Observer Corps lookout platform built about where the War memorial is now - a wooden shed for shelter and a viewing platform so the volunteers could use binoculars to watch for aircraft. A phone was provided to report EVERY instance of aircraft sighting, friend or foe. An air force base at Mallacoota had been built, and is still available for civil use today, so any likely sightings anywhere of enemy aircraft could be investigated by our RAAF from Mallacoota or a larger base at Sale. From this base reconnaissance could also be used to spot enemy submarines.

This post reported the later torpedoing of the BHP iron ore steamer "Iron Monarch" off Bunga Head by a presumed Japanese Submarine. I am told about eight vessels met their end off our South Coast due to enemy action, so the enemy was certainly present there. During this time, late 1942 early 1943, military camps were established at Reedy Swamp road which runs from Tarraganda through the golf course to give access to the north side of the Bega River on its way to the sea just north of Tathra. The site is now used as a pig farm. It was manned by the militia. A water pipe line from Bega was laid by the Army for water to the troops. After the war this pipe line was dug up and removed as no longer needed, believe it or not!

Another camp was built at Blackfellow's Lake, just north of Kalaru, again for Militia based there. I never saw this so I can't say how large it might have been. Small forces allocated to each were augmented by VDC part timers. The road down the edge of the Tathra headland, which was the then mail road to the Tathra ocean Wharf, has been washed away by heavy seas since but during the War a dugout into the rock face on the landward side housed a small group of Militia who had orders to destroy the wharf in the event of a Japanese landing anywhere in the vicinity. The charges were NOT pre-laid on the wharf for safety reasons, since the Illawarra & South Coast Steamship Co., was still plying the route. Luckily they never lost a vessel to enemy action despite no escort and only having their old colours completely obliterated by naval grey paint as camouflage. I witnessed an evening departure from the wharf, heading north and was amazed how the vessel seemed to fade from view against the sea background, long before even reaching Bunga Head.

The connecting roads from Coast to the Monaro high country were not forgotten. Mr. Jeffrey Trotman, supervising Engineer for the Dept. of Main Roads NSW, stationed in Bega, was given the task of selecting points on Brown Mountain, Tantawanglo, Mt. Darragh and Big Jack roads to place mines with the view to the Army blowing away sections of the road in positions difficult in the extreme. Hostile military engineers to repair to allow passage of invading vehicles to get past. Small camps for the forces were set up and foxholes placed in spots where gunfire could be used to delay or repel invading troops. I remember as a small boy of about eight, being taken with him while he took supplies to one of these camps near the Mt Darragh mined point. I still check it out every time I pass it nearly 80 years later! I remember one of the Greek café owners in Bombala, in uniform, greeting me with some delight as one his ice cream buying small customers, showing me the trenches they had dug in case of air attack.

The timing had to allow civilian refugees from the coast to escape before destroying the road. Tricky! Fortunately this never had to be done.

As well as efforts locally, the 14th Battalion VDC which covered our north from Narooma to Kiama, also mined the Clyde Mountain Road, Batemans Bay to Canberra, at a spot still labeled "Pooh Corner" on the steepest part. The dugout they made still carries the sign. The explosives have been removed though local folk lore still claims that not all of them were recovered. If you stop to have a look - beware, apart from limited spots to park!

The VDC was told that their task was to DENY allowing anything of use to the Invader by whatever means, to DELAY the enemy advance and to DEFEND only where they could.

We can all be thankful it never came to that .. and yes I'm married to the late Jeff Trotman's daughter, and heard all about his part in the road mines from him.

BEGA VALLEY LIFE.



Bobby Hayes Trucks June 1968



Early Transport



Bernie Sutton's Truck June 1957



Scanes Transport



Early Transport



Early Transport



Early car.



Steam Engine



## History of the Bega Littleton Sister City Relationship

In 1951, the U.S State Department and the U.S Information Agency initiated the making of the motion picture, "Small Town Editor", for use in foreign countries to encourage a rural press to supplement the usually government-controlled news. This film, made in Littleton, featured Houstoun Waring, editor of the Littleton Independent, who had achieved national recognition for his editorials on foreign affairs. The film was translated in to 23 languages and shown in over 80 countries around the world.

W.B. (Curly) Annabel of the Bega District News saw the film which dealt with the people, goals and production of the Littleton Independent. Entranced by the similarity of Bega and his newspaper with Littleton and its newspaper, Curley began a correspondence with Hous in December 1954 and visited the Waring family in the next American summer.

When President Eisenhower urged sister city relationships through the People-to-People program, Curley and Hous decided in 1960 to form a formal bond between the two towns. This led to an invitation from Curley for the Hous and Irene Waring to attend Bega Week in February 1961. While there, they consummated the association between Bega and Littleton, communities 9,000 miles apart, to become the first Australian and U.S Sister Cities.

In August 1961, Curly brought four young people to Littleton for Western Welcome Week. Thereafter, the custom was established for Littleton to send a delegation on the first and sixth year of the decade and a Bega delegation visits Littleton the third and eighth years. 2021 would have been the 13th official delegation from Littleton to Bega since Hous' initial visit in 1961.

The delegates are hosted by member families and get a unique taste of home life and community activities in addition to tours of the immediate area. A high point of each visit is the International Civic Dinner attended by the delegates, government representatives of both countries, members of various civic organizations and other community members.

**The 2021 exchange was cancelled due to COVID. The next exchange takes place in Bega with the welcome dinner to be held at Bega TAFE on October the 19th.**



W B Curly Annabel



Houstoun (Hous)Waring

# Publications for Sale

<i>Bega District Band</i>	<i>\$10</i>
<i>Bega High - 50 years</i>	<i>Free</i>
<i>Bega Primary 1860-2010</i>	<i>Free</i>
<i>They Made this Valley Home</i>	<i>\$10</i>
<i>Illawarra Steam Ship Company</i>	<i>\$25</i>
<i>The Bushfires of 52</i>	<i>\$20</i>
<i>Bayleys History of Bega</i>	<i>\$20</i>
<i>A Walk Along Carp Street</i>	<i>\$2</i>

