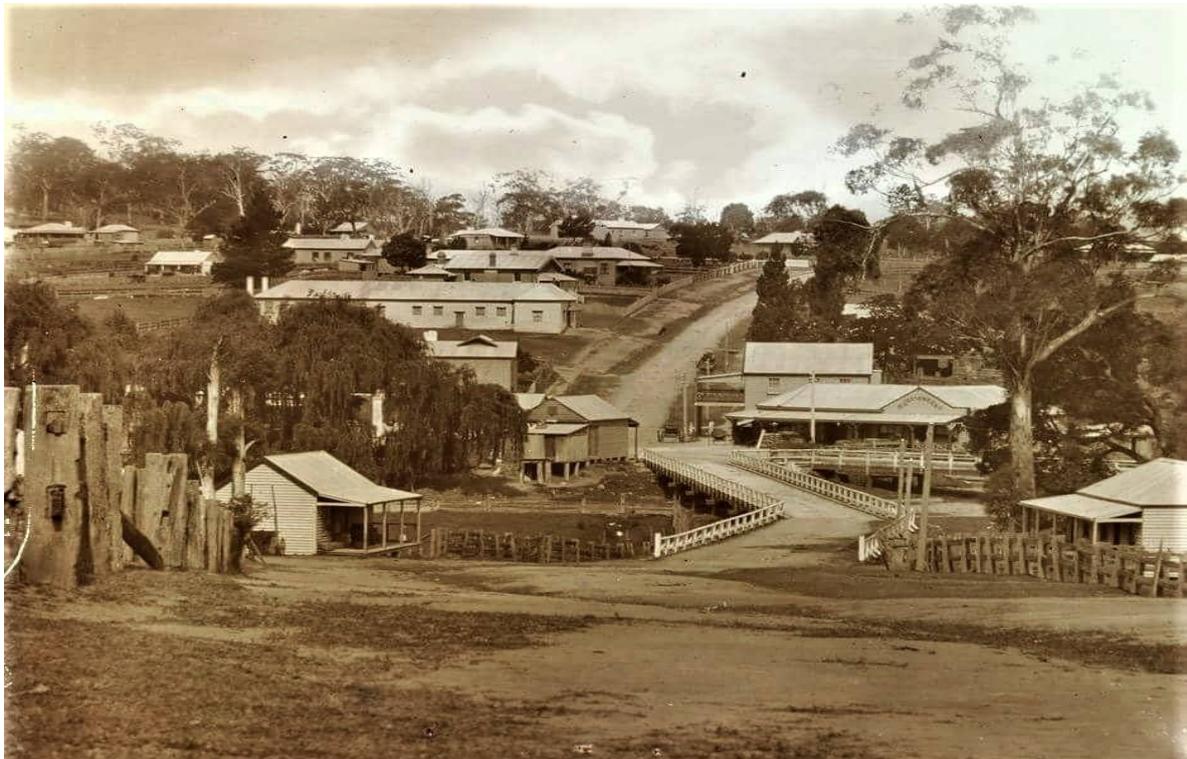


# The Bega Pioneer

*Voice of the Bega Valley Historical Society Inc.*



**COBARGO LOOKING NORTH**

June 2021 Edition



# MUSEUM NEWS

## **BUILDING OWNERSHIP.**

BVSC have agreed to sell the museum building back to the historical society for the sum of \$1. We are currently awaiting the legal paperwork that this entails

## **DISPLAYS**

The photography display has been condensed and now shares the room with the medical display.

In the room that housed the medical display there is now a sporting memorabilia display.

## **VOLUNTEERS.**

Thank you to the following people for their dedication to our museum.

Sylvia Davy - cataloguing and membership coordinator

Christine Patterson - cataloguing the family files.

Michelle Martin- completing and updating the Bega Town Street Heritage Study.

Anne Ducray- cataloguing the newspaper archive.

Ben Bowyer and Loretta Whitby - digitisation.

Yvonne Berman-cleaning the display cases and their contents.

*Have You Changed your  
Email Address?*



*Please let us know  
call 64921453 or  
email [museum25@tpg.com.au](mailto:museum25@tpg.com.au)*

## **NEW VOLUNTEERS**

We are looking for anybody who would be interested in doing restoration work on the exhibits in the outside display rooms and yards?

## **NEW MEMBERS.**

Tony Hastings  
Rebecca Leon Vartto

Check us out on

facebook

## **AGM.**

The AGM of the Bega Valley Historical Society will be held at 10am on Saturday the 17th July at the museum. All members are invited to attend. Nominations for committee close at 4pm on Friday July 9th.

## **NEW FEATURE.**

We will be featuring people from our family history database in the newsletter.

## BEFORE THEY WERE ANZACS

By Di Pryor

As Anzac Day approaches, we cannot help but think of the men who created the legend of the Anzac's, and of the many men and women who have given their all since, to give us the country that we are blessed to live in today. But before the legend was born, an earlier generation of young men was leaving their mark on the world's stage.

Overlooking the swimming pool in Bega Park stands a granite obelisk, the Bega Boer War Memorial. This Memorial was erected by the people of Bega in 1905 in memory of the local boys who fought and died in the Boer War, which began on October 12, 1899.

At the time that the Memorial was erected, a letter was placed in the foundation of the Memorial; this letter was published in The Bega Standard of September 8, 1905 for all to read. It said: -  
"We the undersigned, have this 18th day of August, 1905, laid within the foundation of this monument, 'The Bega Standard', 'The Southern Star', 'The Evening News', and 'The Town and Country Journal'. May this monument stand forever in Australia's soil on which the blood of battle has not yet spilt, and peace, as today, reigns supreme. But if an enemy approach our shore, may every man bear his arms as honourably as our soldiers did in South Africa, to whom this monument is erected; and not only defend Australia, but take an active part in the defence of the Great and Free British Empire.

Let this grand and majestic monument stand so that the sight of it may cause the thrill of patriotism to flow through the veins of all young Australians, and inspire them on to become efficient in the use of modern war machinery and rifles, so that Australians may uphold the freedom and liberty so dearly bought and handed down to us by our noble forefathers who died for the motto -

"Justice and liberty to all men" God Save the King.

Signed: J.F. Zeigler, T. Greenwood, C.J. Langker, F.F. Cowderoy, J.S. Cusack, C. Attrell, George Stains, P. McGuinness, R. Ritchie, A. Abbott, W.J. Johnson, B. Sharpe."

This letter gives us an insight to the way of thinking back then, in some respects, we haven't changed.

Over sixty young men with ties to the Bega Valley volunteered for service, six of which were killed or died during the war. The main body of volunteers, 130 in all, set sail for South Africa on November 3, 1899 on the 'Aberdeen', under the command of Captain J.M. Antill. Was it patriotism and a sense of duty, or was it the idea of adventure that saw such a large proportion of volunteers from this area? We will never know, but we do know that they went, and thus the legend of Australians bravery and valour was born.

Newspaper reports of the time made constant reference to the qualities of the Australians. The Sydney Morning Herald of November 16, 1900, in an article titled "At The Front" states: - "As usual", the men were told, "the pride of place has been given to the Australians".

Much has been written about the Boer War, why it began, what happened during it etc., and much can be learned from reading this sort of history, but it is the personal stories of our local men that touch us most of all.

The first of our men to die was killed by "abominable treachery" on March 10, 1900. Private William John Abraham was riding past a farm house from which a white flag of surrender was flying, when the Boers therein, fired off a volley of shots, one of which hit Will in the chest. A few yards from Will, another Bega man, Surgeon-Captain Joseph Marshall witnessed the tragedy and noted, in a letter to the newspaper, that Will died in a few minutes. Will was buried where he fell, just as the sun was setting behind the low hills. The name of the place Will was killed, Abraham's Kraal!

Will's death was followed just over month later by that of Private William John 'Will' Kirkland who died of enteric fever at Bloemfontein on April 20, 1900. It took a long time for the news of Will's death to reach his family, there had been reports, but none of them had been substantiated. An article in 'The Southern Star' of Wednesday June 6, 1900 entitled 'The Bega Men in South Africa', writing of Will stated:- " He was truly an ideal Australian trooper, being splendidly built, as active as a cat, and a fine horseman. Such a man can ill be spared, but this unfortunate war has sealed the doom of many hundreds of the best and bravest men that have ever gone forth at their country's call, and amongst the galaxy of names that will be honoured as illustrious when the present and future generations shall have passed away, none will deserve better than the men for whom Bega now mourns, Privates Kirkland and Abrahams.

The latter died in action, but the former, after passing successfully through the dangers of shot and shell, was doomed to die by the sadder, and more lingering process of disease. And what can be said to soothe the anguish of a sorrowing mother and father and of brothers and sisters, and of the young lady to whom he was betrothed". What indeed, can be said?

Along with Will Abraham and Will Kirkland, four other men are shown on the Memorial as having been killed or died during the Boer War. They were:-

Private A Thomas FULTON who died of wounds at Kroonstadt on November 23, 1900. He was born in Bombala in 1878, the son of John and Hannah Fulton.

Private Isaac GOODSSELL, son of John and Rebecca Goodsell, was born at Ulladulla in 1878. He died from wounds on June 6,1900 at Bloemfontein. Isaac was with the NSW Army Medical Corps.

Private J. (Jack) MC CRACKEN, had been welcomed home to Bemboka with "great Ceremony" in May 1901. In August 1901, he, with Troopers Payne and Quinlivan, returned to South Africa on the 'Brittannic' for a second term, two months later, on October 18 Jack was killed at Rhenosterfontein.

Private J.H. STEVENSON died after being wounded in battle. We have very little information to hand on this gentleman, as there were several men of the same name recorded as having fought in the Boer War. Further research is being done to ascertain which of these gentlemen is the one recorded on our Memorial.

Two others recorded on the Memorial also died:-

Lance Corporal Patrick John MC NAMARA was killed in action on June 26 1901 at Halfontein. He was a son of Michael and Jane (nee O'Connor) McNamara of Bega and brother of Private Thomas Mc Namara.

Trooper John Henry SALWAY of Kitchener's Fighting Scouts, died on December 22, 1901 of enteric fever. He was the son of Henry and Eliza (nee Payne) who was born at Bega in 1876.

Another to lose his life in the Boer War was Private John BOYD. He is mentioned as being a local boy killed in action at around the same time as Private McCracken. There was a Boyd family at Quaama. His name is one of quite a few that went to the Boer War from this area that are not recorded on the Memorial. Those men were as follows: -

William James ARMSTRONG, David GOODSSELL, Trooper HORSMAN (HORSTMANN?), Trooper PAYNE, Farrier-Sergeant Charles William SEAGAR, Harry SECCOMBE (SERCOMBE?), John Felix L WALL and Trooper John WILLIAMS.

There are many other names recorded on the Memorial, all these men fought, and some died, to preserve a way of life that we cherish to this day. Most came home, some to fight another day, with several of these men joining up again in WW1, and so, a legend was born.

## Supreme Sacrifice

### Keith Cochrane

Mr and Mrs Arthur Cochrane of Bega received sad news from the authorities on Tuesday afternoon of the death of their son, Sergeant-Pilot Keith Cochrane. The news was not only a great blow to the family but also caused grief throughout the community. After undergoing a course of training with the air force in Australia Keith went to Canada under the Empire air training scheme where he gained his wings and subsequently went to England where he took part in several attacks over the Channel. From there he was sent to the Middle East and for some time had been at Malta, probably the hottest spot in the whole war area, having suffered over two thousand air raids. Only a few days ago Keith had cabled his people that he was well and asking them to keep smiling. All through his letters home had been most cheerful. Now he has given his fine young life in defence of his country, and the freedom and liberty of his fellows. It is the greatest sacrifice any man can make and his name will be added to the scroll of heroes who have died that others might live. He did not shirk when the call of duty came and we may well believe that before he met his fate he had done his duty nobly and well. That must always be a consoling thought for the sorrowing mother and father and brothers and sisters. Before enlisting Keith had been employed with Balmain Bros Ltd., Bega. He was always a fine boy and the whole community mourns with his people in their grief.

### FAMILY ABRAHAM

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#### **DEATH NOTICE**

ALICE MAY 9/12 1965 aged 9 months; buried Rookwood No 496 Sec S; parents Edward H and Sarah Ann.

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#### **TROOPER ABRAHAM'S LAST STAND**

The British attacked on the morning of 10 March near Abrahams' Kraal lying closest to the Modder, the enemy was held all day while the main attack was directed at the Driefontein kopjes a few miles to the south.

With the Boer flank resting somewhere along the Modder River under Captain Antill carried out a reconnaissance to determine the extent of Boer positions.

They succeeded in drawing the enemy's fire but in doing so trooper W J Abraham was killed by a shot fired from a farmhouse which was flying the white flag of neutrality.

In Abraham's pocket his mates found an unopened letter from his mother that he had not yet had time to read.

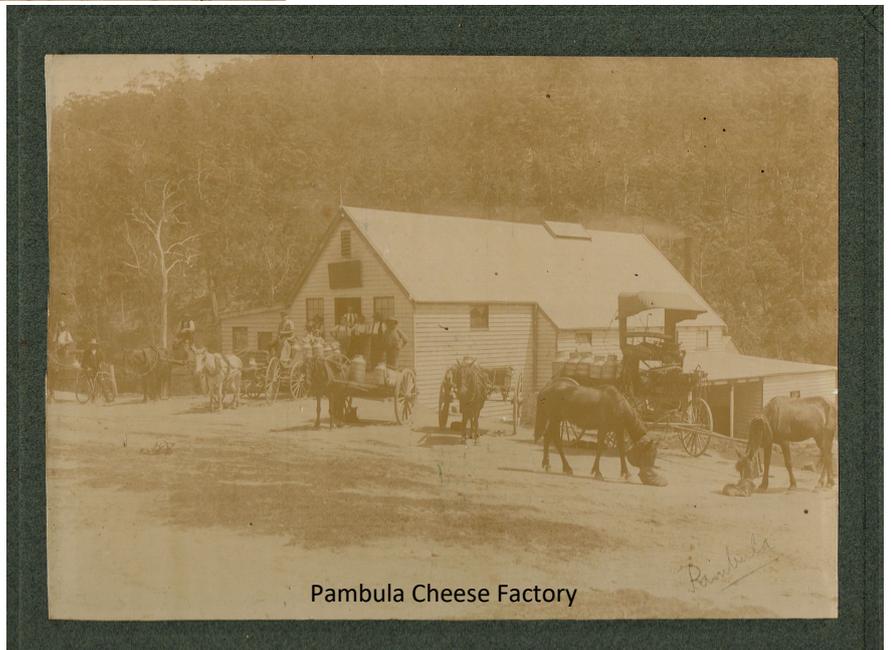
He was buried where he fell just as the sun was setting behind the hills.

Trooper Abraham was the 6th soldier from NSW to die in south Africa.



John and Letitia Abraham  
(nee Neeves)

# Wood Photographs



# Publications for Sale

Bismark House	\$20
Bega District Band	\$5
Bega High - 50 years Bega	\$5
Primary 1860-2010	\$10
They Made this Valley Home	\$25
Illawarra Steam Ship Company	\$25
The Bushfires of 52	\$20
Bayleys History of Bega	\$25



**Bega Valley Historical Society Inc.**

**Incorporating**

**Bega Pioneers' Museum**

**87 Bega Street, Bega NSW 2550**

**Committee**

President: Peter Rogers

Secretary: Kaye Jauncey

Treasurer : Helen Jauncey

Research Officer: Margaret Sly

Committee Members:

Doug Russell

Bill Fletcher

Regina Huntington

Aly Walsh

Brett Bowyer

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Website: [begavalleyhistoricalsociety.com.au](http://begavalleyhistoricalsociety.com.au)

**MUSEUM OPENING HOURS**

Monday, Wednesday, Friday and 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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