



Preserving & promoting Goldfields history

EASTERN GOLDFIELDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

SPRING NEWSLETTER October 2017 – No. 16

What's in this Newsletter?

New Committee	p1	First Boulder Cemetery	p5
Trans-Australia Railway Centenary	p1	Collection Focus "Olden Day" objects.....	p5
EGHS Library News	p2	Collection Focus Mary Irving, early Boulder boarding house keeper	p6
Recent Acquisition.....	p2	Diary Dates	p7
WA School of Mines Library	p4	Talk: Performing Arts in 1890s.....	p7
Keith White Negative Collection	p4		
Volunteer Feature – Barry Aslett	p4		

New Committee

Congratulations to all new and re-elected Committee Members who were endorsed at the AGM in August 2017:

Executive

President	W Scott Wilson
First Vice President	Anne Skinner
Second Vice President	Rob Wall
Secretary	Robin Bowden
Treasurer	Chris Williamson

Committee Members

Curator	John Rees
Research Coordinator	Faye Jones
Photographic Coordinator	Claire Weir
Librarian	Jan Lamont
Social Coordinator	Bev Quartermaine
Ordinary Member	Harry Argus
Ordinary Member	Robyn Horner
Ordinary Member	Allison Golsby
Ordinary Member	Ross Quartermaine

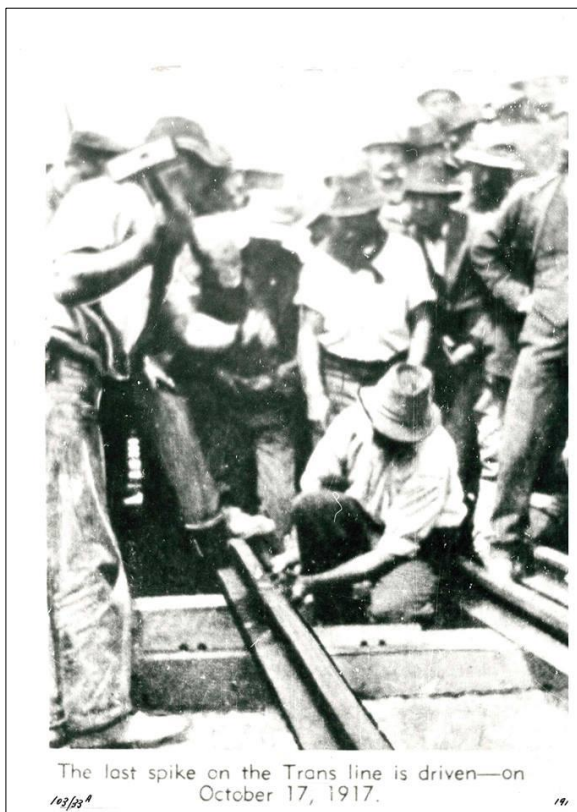
One of the tasks ahead for the new Committee is a review of the Strategic Plan 2011-2021. Ten years is a long time for any plan, and mid-point is a good opportunity to see how the Society has fared so far and consider the continuing goals for the next few years.

Another task is to prepare a new Constitution. Many EGHS members will be aware that all incorporated associations in Western Australia need to comply with the Associations Act 2015 by June 2019. EGHS' current Constitution doesn't meet the requirements of the new Act; once a draft version of the new Constitution is finalized, members can expect to be invited to a Special General Meeting early in 2018 to approve the changed Constitution

TRANS AUSTRALIA RAIL Centenary

24 October 2017 marks the centenary of the first arrival in Kalgoorlie of the Trans Australian Train from Port Augusta. This was an important milestone, linking Western Australia to the rest of the country. The railway was important for moving both people and freight.

Two exhibitions about the Trans-Australia Railway organized by Heritage Services, City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder, one at the Museum of the Goldfields and the other at the William Grundt, will include items on loan from the Historical Society.



The last spike on the Trans line is driven—on October 17, 1917.

Historian and author Phillipa Rogers will give a talk at the Museum of the Goldfields on Monday 23 October 2017 at 6pm. RSVP to the Museum on eomog@museum.wa.gov.au or 9021 8533. Phillipa has written two books about the history of Railways in Western Australia.

EGHS Library News

A book that was featured in an earlier newsletter this year was *Red Dust Racers* by Graeme Cocks. EGHS received this email from Graeme recently:

We received some great news over the weekend, embargoed until this morning in London. My book Red Dust Racers, about Lake Perkolilli, has been short-listed for the Royal Automobile Club of the United

Kingdom's Motoring Book of the Year Awards of 2017. As one of the most prestigious motoring organisations in the world it is very exciting that the book has been acclaimed as one of the club's top six books of 2017 — not bad for a book about a clay pan in the bush near Kalgoorlie! . . . We now keep our fingers-crossed for the final announcement on 1 November.

Red Dust Racers was previously awarded the gold medal in the Transportation category of the Independent Publishers Book Awards at BookExpo America in New York on 30 May 2017 and was shortlisted for Book of the Year at the International Historic Motoring Awards in London.

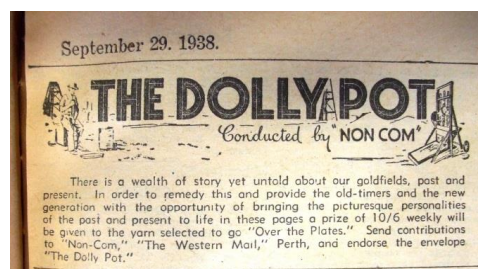
One of the judges Mark Dixon says about this book: "Fantastic photos, memorabilia and anecdotes revive the memory of the Australian Outback racing institution that was Lake Perkolilli".

This book is available in the research section of the EGHS Library.

Recent Acquisition: *The Dolly Pot, Highways & By-ways, Roamin' Round, and B.Bs*

Tess Thomson, Life Member since 1993 of the Eastern Goldfields Historical Society, recently donated five bound volumes of *The Western Mail* (from 1935 to 1940).

The Western Mail was a magazine broadsheet directed to prospectors, featuring many regular columns including *The Dolly Pot* and *Highways & By-ways*. 'Conducted' by 'NON COM', *The Dolly Pot* featured stories about the goldfields, past and present (at time of publication).



One such story from September 29, 1938 was **The Kanowna Hospital** written by Harry Wallis, as follows:

"DEAR "Non-Com,"- In the "Dolly Pot" of August 25 there appeared a photograph of the first Kanowna hospital. It brought back a flood of memories.

My mate, Joe Dolan, and I opened the hospital in the latter part of 1895, and believe me, "Non-com" it was a rough old thing in hospitals. The frame was of gimlet wood saplings covered with hessian, with a bough shed built over all. No boarded floor, just the loose earth; no kitchen to cook in - what little cooking had to be done was done in the open with billies and camp oven, and consisted mostly of beef tea and cornflour.

There were eight beds, or rather eight bag stretchers, no sheets or pillow cases, and the patients brought their own rugs. At that time there were only my mate and myself to look after the patients (enteric and typhoid). Sister McLeod did not take over the hospital until later. We were orderlies, nurses, cooks, etc., neither Dolan or myself having had any previous experience of nursing, but the progress committee were glad enough to get anybody at that time.

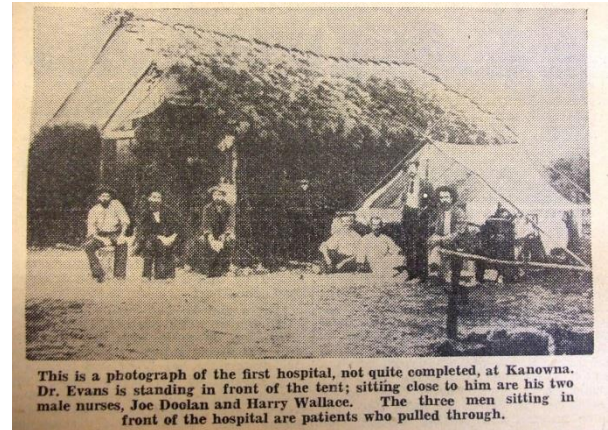
Churches or parsons hadn't then arrived at Kanowna, so it fell to my lot to read the burial service. The funeral arrangements were more than crude. Bill Hack, who ran a condenser, did the undertaking as a sideline. Most of the coffins were made out of any old case wood procured from the storekeepers, but of course, covered with black cloth. The hearse (save the mark) was an old spring dray, and several times Bill Hack and I would be the only two at the cemetery.

When I look back, "Non-Com," 43 years ago to the rough old way I had to battle in that hospital, I sometimes think I ran as big a risk as I did with the "Old Sixteenth" in France.

HARRY WALLIS, Victoria Park"

Of course, you can get these articles on Trove, a wonderful online resource provided by the National Library of Australia (the link to this article here

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/37855861>). However, there is a delight in browsing through these bound papers and finding a diverse range of articles and illustrations.



From "The Dolly Pot", May 12, 1938

Looking at Robert Baugh's *Wealth for the Willing: The Story of Kanowna*, there is a lot of information about the establishment of the hospital:

In those first days of the hospital's existence, two miners, Harry Wallis and Joe Doolan, volunteered not only to act as makeshift nurses and orderlies but even cooks. Cooking was done outside in camp ovens and billies and meals consisted mostly of tinned beef, tea and cornflour.

In his book Baugh uses excerpts from his grandfather Richard Baugh's diaries. (Richard Baugh was a pharmacist in Kanowna before it became a 'ghost town', then practised in Kalgoorlie). Here Richard Baugh writes about the first hospital:

Saturday, 5 January 1895

Extremely hot today. Hospital opened today. Two patients – Field and Wing – were placed in the hospital – the first arrivals. The nurse that was going to attend came to me this morning in an awful state and vowed she wouldn't work on

account of something one of the Progress Committee . . . had said to her. Owen had to chase out to find a man to do the nursing for the time being.

This small slice of history was enriched through the wonderful resources at the Historical Society; as a member you are very welcome and encouraged to spend some time at Society premises, to see what interesting histories you can unearth.

WA School of Mines Kalgoorlie Library

Curtin's WA School of Mines Kalgoorlie Library now has free Community Membership. The library houses a unique collection of mining and related resources for the Western Australian School of Mines (WASM) .

Contact Librarian and EGHS Member Teresa Bennett on 9088 6630 to sign up or for further information.

The School of Mines Library is open weekdays from 8am to 6pm and is located at Building 701 on Egan Street, Kalgoorlie.

Looking for information: Keith White Collection of negatives



Keith White Collection – details unknown (KW N EG TO249)

Further to needing more regular volunteers, we also need some people who have a good knowledge of Eastern Goldfield history and mine sites. You are invited to come and sit for an hour or so with one of the researchers to add valuable information to the terrific images that have been digitized to date.

Contact the EGHS office on 9093 3360 or eghs@kalgoorliehistory.org.au if you are interested, but not quite sure what is involved.

Volunteer Feature – Barry Aslett

In the previous financial year, volunteers donated 3,482 work hours to the Society. Valued out in cash terms at the (modest) rate of \$25 per hour, the economic value of volunteer's work in 2016-2017 was \$87,050. This is an enormous contribution to the work of the Society, helping to preserve and promote the history and heritage of the region.

Thank you to the more than 20 regular EGHS volunteers.

In this newsletter, we are featuring a more recent volunteer Barry Aslett. Many will know Barry through his career as an educator and School Principal of over 40 years. But Barry has many other accomplishments: he is also a golf champion (and has a street named after him, Aslett Drive, leading to the new Kalgoorlie Golf Course); he is a former cricketer and also a stalwart of the Kalgoorlie Bridge Club (he started playing Bridge as a child with his grandmother at four years old when she needed a Bridge partner!). After his retirement from the Education Department, Barry was co-owner of Goldfields Sport and Leisure for over a decade.

Regarding golfing passion, Barry quips that he was "married to the job, but had a life time affair with golf".

Barry started with the Historical Society in February 2017. His work covers two areas: the first is typing hand written records into a database to enable easy searching for documents; and the second area is collating and listing documents from the backlog of uncatalogued items.

Even though this is necessary work, it can sometimes be tedious. But Barry is a great raconteur and he always livens things up with stories of his experiences, the people he has met and local identities. He is a fount of knowledge regarding local history, which he is able to share with visitors.

With the work of volunteers like Barry Aslett, the backlog of documents is being reduced, though this sort of work is ongoing.

The First Boulder Cemetery

A Rededication of the First Boulder Cemetery took place on 16 August 2017, with some EGHS members attending and Life Members Tess Thomson and Scott Wilson speaking.

Burials took place at the Cemetery from September 1899 to May 1904, with a total of 797 burials. It was the excessive cost of grave digging in the ironstone ground sections, and the inadequate road access, that led to the closure of the 'Old Cemetery'.

Graves were allocated in sections according to religion, with one General Section.

"This General Section was set aside for those who did not belong to any denominations, or who were perhaps non-Christians.

Among the six burials in the General Section, (there) are two young Aboriginal girls, a Japanese man and Alexander Solomon who committed suicide in the Boulder Police Station while being charged for attempted murder.

This burial of Solomon is counter to the popularly held belief that 'suicides' were always buried outside the cemetery.

The suicide of Alexander Solomon caused sensational newspaper stories with headlines like "The Boulder Sensation", "A Diabolical Case" and "The Extraordinary Tragedy". Known to police as someone involved with gold-stealing, Solomon tried to kill a young associate named Rasmussen by enticing him

to eat some scones he had laced with strychnine. When the strychnine began to take effect, Solomon left the house pretending to go for a doctor, but did not return. When Rasmussen's plight was discovered and his illness diagnosed, Solomon was promptly arrested and taken to the Boulder Police Station.

While being questioned, he collapsed and died on the floor of the charge room, as a result of taking cyanide."

Tess Thompson, The First Boulder Cemetery interpretation booklet, 2013

Collection Focus 'Olden Day' objects

The Historical Society had a great day at the recent Spring Festival at Hammond Park in Kalgoorlie. The weather was perfect, with over 9,000 people attending on the day, many of whom visited the Society stall.

The stall featured a display of 'olden days' domestic items: wash tub, washing board and small hand wringer; kerosene lamps, tapers, an early model electric iron and a stove top iron, jugs and milk containers.

Curiously, the item that was of interest to many adults was the insecticide pump.

SHELLTOX Death to every pest

Many people recounted stories of themselves or their mothers using the pump in their homes. It was interesting to observe how such an unglamorous item elicited so many stories from people and explanations to children.



Collection Focus - Mary Elizabeth Irving and an early boarding house in Boulder

From John Rees, Honorary Curator

This indomitable woman, born about 1838 in Ireland, arrived in Adelaide from her sea journey. She was on her way to see a sister in Victoria when she had the misfortune to marry a drunk, one Thomas Irving. He was subsequently arrested for beating his wife in 1861 and had a warrant out for desertion in 1864.

Mary gave up on the domestic violence and travelled up the Murray to Mildura “like a gipsy”, as a daughter described it. She had two sons and two daughters to take care of along this trail of Mt Pleasant, Blanchetown, Morgan, Renmark and Wentworth.

A necessary skill in these impoverished circumstances was the ability to make a meal out of nothing, for instance, the lungs, heart and liver of a sheep. She was keen on education for her daughters, but not too much liberation, for when two snuck out to go to a dance, she sent the police after them.

One daughter, Jessie, had some of Mum’s feistiness, as she fell out with the head of her teacher training college and had to leave. There is an anecdote that a miscreant, knowing there was no man about the house, attempted to come down the chimney after Mary refused him food and he threatened her with dire consequences. Mary simply lit the fire.

She must have formed another liaison as the youngest girl, Isabella, had a father named Joseph Marrad. Son William was killed by a train, another tragedy to dog her existence.

In 1897 they all sailed from Adelaide to Fremantle in the SS Semaphore, intent on getting to the Goldfields to make money, with a five month old baby, courtesy of unmarried daughter Mary-Anna (Marion?). She contracted to travel up by wagon, all of them walking when the motion became too uncomfortable. The railway went all the way to Kalgoorlie by then, but perhaps it was cheaper by wagon.

She found a way to build an iron house with hessian walls as a boarding house for unmarried men. The daughters all ended up marrying various boarders and two remained in the Goldfields.



Marion, Jessie, Mary, Isabelle Irving outside one of the first boarding houses in Boulder (2017.142)

Mary then declared her intent to return to South Australia, but the girls indicated that they were tired of the nomadic life and wouldn’t drag their husbands after her. The old lady, by now getting on, reconsidered her decision and decided to remain in Boulder. She apparently succumbed to Alzheimer’s disease as she died at Claremont mental asylum in 1908.

Diary Dates

Monday 23 October – 5.45pm for a 6pm start, **talk by Philippa Rogers**, Rail Heritage WA **Centenary of the Trans-Australian Railway**, Museum of the Goldfields; RSVP to eomog@museum.wa.gov.au or 9021 8533

Friday 3 November – 7pm **Repertory Club**, talk about performing arts in the 1890s Goldfields by **Norma Latchford**, RSVP essential to 9093 3360 or eghs@kalgoorliehistory.org.au

15 November 2017 – 7pm EGHS general meeting, **Guest Speakers - Phil Bianchi & Joe Little**; Phil is one of the editors of a series of publications about the Woodlines of the Goldfields. His father, Siro Bianchi, worked on the Woodlines for various companies. Joe has a long interest in the Woodlines. This is bound to be an interesting talk, please come along and enjoy the company of fellow EGHS members.

Sunday 19 November 2017 – Boulder Market Day; free tours of the Boulder Town Hall conducted by EGHS volunteers

Friday 1 December 2017 – **Fish & Chip night** for EGHS members at the Historical Society, with showing of film *Kalgoorlie-Boulder and District: Moving memories 1907-1980s* from the National Film & Sound Archive; \$16 per person, RSVP to 9093 3360 or eghs@kalgoorliehistory.org.au

Sunday 17 December 2017 - Final Boulder Markets for 2017; an opportunity to stock up on Christmas gifts and support local suppliers; free KCGM bus tours leave on the hour from the Eastern Goldfields Historical Society premises (wear covered shoes, long sleeves and long pants).

Sunday 17 December 2017 – Afternoon/evening; **EGHS Members Christmas Party**; save the date, more details closer to the time.

INVITATION

Performing Arts in the Eastern Goldfields in the late 19th century



Photo: Xmas Performers 1917 (MG 373 McCafer GNB 001)

EGHS member Norma Latchford is researching the relationship between mining and the performing arts in the 19th century, focusing on the gold rush at Ballarat in the 1850s and the gold rush in the Eastern Goldfields in the 1890s

EGHS members and guests are invited to a presentation

by Norma Latchford

Goldfields Repertory Club, 7 Brookman Street,

Friday 3rd November 2017 at 7pm

Cash bar open

Nibbles provided by the Goldfields Repertory Club

Please RSVP to 9093 3360 or via email eghs@kalgoorliehistory.org.au