

EDEN KILLER WHALE MUSEUM / 02 64962094 / EMAIL promo@killerwhalemuseum.com.au

Special Interest Articles:

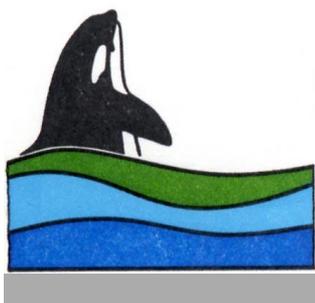
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FIRE – OUR RECENT HISTORY

For all who lived through the terrifying events in early 2020, the **Black Summer** fires which devastated the Far South Coast will have an impact for some time to come.

Living at Wonboyn Lake we were in the thick of it, with burnt out residences and outbuildings around us.

The Eden Killer Whale Museum Curator Jody White contacted me inviting residents to donate damaged and burnt items for the collection.

Our thanks to the Burch family, owners of Wonboyn Cabins and Caravan Park for donating melted glass bottles that were in the recycling bins and an exploded gas cylinder, and to Mick and Colin Thoran for a toaster that was truly toasted.

Subject to approval at the next curatorial meeting, these items would give museum visitors an idea of the intensity of those fires and are now part of the history of this area.

This issue is dedicated to all our brave firefighters, army, navy and emergency personnel and the residents who stayed to defend their homes and those of their neighbors.

Our tiny township is small in size but big in spirit. Our local library is recording stories of these fires for the State Library archives as social history and I am writing a book to complement this.

Thankfully there was no loss of life here. Not so in past fires. In my research I was amazed at how history repeats itself.

IT'S ALL IN THE NAME

We Aussies are good at naming everything, so it should be no surprise that we name our major fires.

Here is a short list of just some of them.

1850-51 the **Black Thursday** fires in Victoria burnt 5,000,000 hectares, 12 people lost their lives, 1 million sheep and thousands of cattle also perished.

1897-98 **Red Tuesday**, 12 people killed, 2,000 buildings and 260,000 hectares destroyed.

1926 – **Red Sunday** in NSW **Black Sunday** in Victoria where 60 people lost their lives over a two month period.

1939 **Black Friday** saw 650

homes destroyed and 71 people died.

1951 **Black Tuesday** fires burnt in most states with 5,000 fires, 4.5 million hectares burnt 13 deaths in NSW and ACT alone.

1967 **Black Tuesday** in Tasmania where 62 people died and 1,300 homes were lost.

1974-75 **No name fires** where 15% of Australia burned an area the size of England, all states except ACT impacted.

1983 **Ash Wednesday** in Victoria and South Australia with 75 dead and 1,900 homes gone – I can remember this one as I was in Ballarat when the



The Chip Mill on fire – Chris Bingham

I hope that in telling these stories and sharing the history we might learn a little and understand that our country's forests are born to burn with the fierce heat of fires allowing them to re-generate.

I would suggest you read **Firestick burning** by Vic Jurskis which is available in the EKWM shop.



Cathryn from the Eden Public Library recording Naomi Furrer's of the Netherlands Wonboyn fire story for the NSW State Library.

sky turned black and ash rained down around us.

2001 **Black Christmas** 100 fires burnt through NSW and ACT for 23 days, no loss of life, 7350,000 hectares gone.

2006 **Black Tuesday** 1 million hectares burnt over 69 days 3 deaths in NSW and Tasmania.



Ash Wednesday



Black Tuesday

TIME TRAVEL TO FIRES AROUND EDEN

I wondered if any fires impacted on Eden in the past after witnessing our close call recently.

1909 Telegraph lines of communication were cut off from Mallacoota and Gabo Island. Operators were only able to work from Eden to Sydney. In some parts linesman had to flee from the fire and were unable to effect repairs. Staffords farm at Bellbird Hill was yesterday swept in the space of minutes the roar of oncoming fire was plainly heard in Eden. The heat at times was suffocating. Boyd Town estate was invaded and the church erected by Mr. Ben Boyd lost the shingles on its roof. Splendid rain set in and an inch fell relieving the district. On the 3rd of January the heat was intense with the town enveloped with dense smoke making it difficult to breathe. Three miles from town the fire was fanned by a gale of wind, and the road from Eden to Towamba is blocked with fallen timber. At night fires were made to check the original fire's progress.

1926 The country around Eden was swept by a big

fire on Sunday and three homes were burnt. Car loads of men went out to fight the fire but flames beat them back. The wind changed and they returned home to save their own houses as the fire swept into town. This was similar to Black Thursday in 1883 when an in-sweeping bush fire wrought considerable destruction. Isolated homes on the western side of the town were saved with defenders fighting flames until midnight. The business portion of the town narrowly escaped the flames as it crossed a street parallel with the main street. Residents are recovering from Red Friday when flames came on the town like waves and the smoke was so dense that it blotted out the sunlight. Shops in the street caught alight from showers of cinders but a band of workers checked outbreaks. With the fire came a fierce gale which tore the balcony off the Bank of New South Wales. A double chimney crashed through the balcony of Great Southern Hotel. A wind change saved the shops. Many farms were wiped out at Nethercote and all roads leading to Eden are impassable owing to fallen timber. A cow locked in her shed was roasted alive.

1952 Fires flared up destroying 10 homes in Wonboyn. Hot

north westerly winds became avenging monsters of red flames. A wall of fire swept down from the Nethercote hills racing towards Cattle Bay within minutes it raced up the hill towards the town. Homes along Cocora and Imlay streets were saved with homes on Wharf hill had charred floorboards. By 3.30 smoke was so dense it turned daylight into darkness. The country from Bega to the Victorian border resembles a waste land.

1980 A fire believed to have started in a pile of bark involved in a burn-off in May burnt half of the Timbillica State Forest and all Nadgee State Forest and Nature Reserve. It got up to 44 degrees after the fire was detected with humidity down to 10 per cent and a strong southerly wind reaching up to 150 km/h. 100 RAN personnel were flown in from HMAS Albatross, Nowra, to Merimbula and moved into the fire zone. Under direction from the NSW Forestry Commission they started to clear fire breaks.

The town of Wonboyn was saved. *Does any of this sound familiar?*



Photo above of Boyd's tower and below one taken at the Eden Wharf by Rob Whiter in 2020 during our recent fires.



Navy personnel, who were airlifted from HMAS Albatross, Nowra, to Merimbula yesterday to fight bushfires at Eden, load supplies into a bus at Merimbula Airport.

Navy personnel HMAS Albatross flown in to



EKWM PROVIDES SAFE REFUGE

EKWM curator Jody White had a very busy time during the fire period as local community organisations asked if EKWM could safeguard treasures during the fire event. We are fortunate to have Jody available to ensure the collection and our greatest asset, Old Tom, is protected and cared for – a task she continued to maintain throughout the fire period. Happily there was no damage to the museum and our collection when many other museums in our area were under threat. Thanks to everyone who has helped with the clean up during this challenging time. Our museum was closed while the threat to Eden was at its worst for the sake of staff and the museum. The interruption to EKWM business was considerable as it was to all local businesses.



William Strutt (1825-1915) left Europe and on 5 July 1850 arrived in Melbourne on the *Culloden*. This painting depicts the terrible bushfire which engulfed Victoria only days before the discovery of gold. Many died and the city was filled with dust, smoke and a rain of cinders, the glow of which could be seen from far out at sea. In his journal, Strutt later wrote: I can never forget the morning of that scorching Thursday, ever after memorable in the annals of the Colony as “Black Thursday” — the sun looked red all day, almost as blood, and the sky the colour of mahogany. We felt in town that something terrible (with the immense volumes of smoke) must be going on up country and sure enough messenger after messenger came flocking in with tales of distress and horror” (*State Library of Victoria/Ergo*). In context, “the year 1850 had been one of exceptional heat and drought. Pastures had withered; creeks had become fissured clay-pans; water-holes had disappeared; sheep and cattle had perished in great numbers, and the sun-burnt plains were strewn with their bleached skeletons; the very leaves upon the trees crackled in the heat, and appeared to be as inflammable as tinder... the temperature became torrid, and on the morning of the 6th of February 1851, the air which blew down from the north resembled the breath of a furnace. A fierce wind arose, gathering strength and velocity from hour to hour, until about noon it blew with the violence of a tornado. By some inexplicable means it wrapped the whole country in a sheet of flame – fierce, awful, and irresistible” (*Picturesque Atlas of Australasia, 1886*).

FIRE MUSEUMS IN NSW

Many will be aware of the **Penrith Museum of Fire** with firefighting vehicles dating from 1841 to 1998. The fleet was added to the New South Wales State Heritage Register on 25 February 2013.

The Fire Brigade Historic Society of the ACT was formed in 1979. They have a number of restored fire appliances dating from 1913 – 1980’s on display. Their museum

in the old Forrest Fire Station is open to the public most Saturdays from 10am – 2pm a gold coin donation is appreciated.

The Coolamon Fire Museum opened in 2015. Items are from all over Australia and the world including Peru and Africa. Old breathing apparatus from the 1800’s and over 100 helmets from the 1830’s to today, are featured with

mannequins dressed in full firefighting uniforms. There is also a photo display showcasing Coolamon’s early firefighting history. The museum is open from 10am – 4pm seven days a week and also houses the Visitors Advice Centre.

Photos – above Penrith Museum of Fire
Middle – Forrest Fire Station Museum ACT
Below – Coolamon Fire Museum



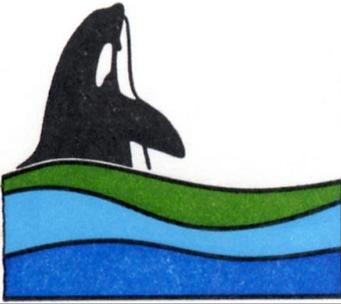
BRING ON THE SHIPS

The *Norwegian Jewel*, visited Eden after some cruise ship cancellations due to the fires.

This ship almost pulled out as they had heard on USA TV that Eden was destroyed by fire. Since then we have had two more no shows as fires again ignited causing dense

smoke to blanket our area. We are hoping that our season will now continue without a hitch as the Far South Coast has taken a massive hit financially from this disaster. EKWM guide Trish Lamacraft was given rave reviews by passengers. Well done Trish!





COMING EVENTS:

EASTER HOLIDAYS
10TH APRIL GOOD
FRIDAY

SEHGI MEETING SAT.
9TH OF MAY VENUE
TO BE ADVISED

EXHIBITIONS —
WILD CATCH
CRUISING FORWARD
A COASTAL JOURNEY

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

SEE US AT.

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THEN AND NOW

To our delight most of the museums in our area, including Cobargo, survived the terrible destruction. Cheers went up when we realized that Edrom Lodge, Davidson's Whaling Station, Wonboyn House and other historic buildings came through unscathed. Our thanks to all who worked so hard to save our local heritage.

Sadly we lost some iconic structures and the Genoa



LIFE ON HOLD

With all the upheavals of evacuations, and the dangers of this fire season, the usual SEHGI meeting was deferred to the second Saturday in May and as

yet no venue has been advised. The Australia Day address was given by Uniting Church minister Michael Palmer.

BUSHFIRE SPECTACLES -1851

On a tag attached to this personal item a piece of family history has been typewritten. It states that these spectacles were worn by Caroline Armytage during the Black Thursday bush fire, of 6 February 1851. It is unknown when Caroline Armytage nee Tuckwell, immigrated to Australia. Her name does not appear on the 'Atlanta' passenger lists, on which members of her family travelled in 1849. Her name appears in the 1851 British census and she was therefore not

in the colony at the time of the Black Thursday fires. The inscription on the label could refer to her future husband Charles Armytage, as the bushfires burnt parts of the Geelong district. Thomas Austin and the Reverend Love – who was presiding minister at the marriage of Caroline's sister – were active in the recovery and aid after the fires. The Armytage lands once adjoined those of the Austins and Caroline was governess to Thomas Austin's children at Barwon Park when she met her future husband at church.



Thomas Austin introduced wild rabbits to his property in Geelong, Victoria, for hunting in 1859. By 1886, rabbits had spread north to New South Wales and Queensland. Domesticated rabbits were first introduced to Australia in 1788. The first feral populations were observed in Tasmania in 1827.



EDEN KILLER WHALE MUSEUM

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS:

EXEC PANEL MEETING	3PM 2 ND THURSDAY	MUSEUM LIBRARY
CURATORIAL MEETING	2PM 3 RD MONDAY	MUSEUM LIBRARY
FRIENDS MEETING	9AM 3 RD WEDNESDAY	MUSEUM LIBRARY