



# HISTORY ROOM

## NEWS



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by Dawn Juers

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It is very interesting to see some of the donations that come into the History Room. A few years ago a small notebook was handed in and duly placed in the glass case. This notebook was really quite insignificant but it has intrigued me all



PS Cadell on the Slip

these years. It was a daily record or workbook for 1883 but written in an 1873 cash book owned by Thomas Smith, shipwright, of Goolwa. Thomas recorded the timber and materials used for the customer-i.e. Jarrah, Kaurie, Coal Tar, Gum, Oakum, Potch/pitch. Some of the vessels were – Blue Belle, Rob Roy, Morning star, Emily, Edwards, Tyro, Diamantina, Queen, Fairy of the Lake, Cato, and Wentworth. Some entries were written in pen and ink – others in pencil. One notation that caught my attention is “*Capt Barber – old brass in store to be weighed and brought into office credit written with weight and amount*”. Thomas kept a tally of the hours his workmen put in – some of those names are –

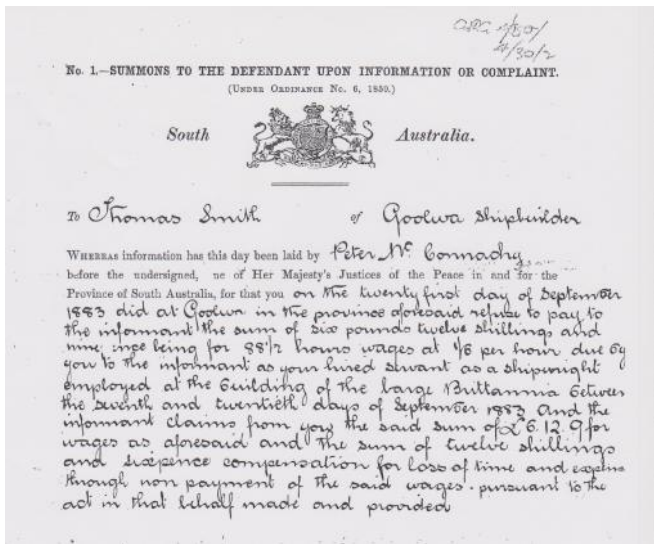
Gordon, McConnachy, Moore, Reid, White, Main, O’Neil, Hamilton, Ross, Matulick, Constant, McDonald, Neighbour, Hill, Hains, and Gilbert.

Little information can be found on Thomas Smith, shipwright of Goolwa. The following is an extract of an article in the “*Southern Argus*” 5 July 1883. “*Shipbuilding at Goolwa*”.....“*between 30-40 men are constantly employed and more would be put on if they could be procured. We might mention that all boats lately turned out, as well as those being now constructed at the Goolwa yards have been designed and laid out by Mr T. Smith, the well- known shipwright, and each of them reflects great credit on his skill, as well as to the contractor, Mr Graham*”.

Unfortunately, it seems things were not as rosy as the newspaper hinted, as in October of that same year, Thomas Smith was summoned to appear before the local court for failing to pay Peter McConnachy for nearly 90 hours’ wages for his part in building the barge *Brittania*. Likewise, Walter Ross brought an action against Smith for non-payment of wages for over 41 hours of work on the same barge. On the other hand, Smith claimed that Graham’s Goolwa Iron Works and Patent Slip owed him £176.5.0. The case went before the Local Court, Goolwa on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1883 with Thomas Smith pleading guilty. It makes interesting reading in the “*Southern Argus*” 18<sup>th</sup> October 1883.

These were not healthy indicators for the business and by 1885 it was forced to close. The following year the Marine Board took over the yards, and, in 1887 Richard Craig bought the slip and Chaffey Brothers purchased all the machinery the following year, moving it to Renmark.

Tragically, the barge *Brittania* did not have a long life either, as about 5a.m. on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1888 at Craigie Creek, 150 miles above Morgan, near Bookpurnong Station, she took fire and eventually sank. Within 8 minutes it was all over. Apparently the vessel had only recently been overhauled at a cost of £4000. She was on her way to Wentworth with 20 passengers and 180 tons of general cargo. She was built for the hawking trade between Goolwa and Wentworth and was fitted with a **shop**.



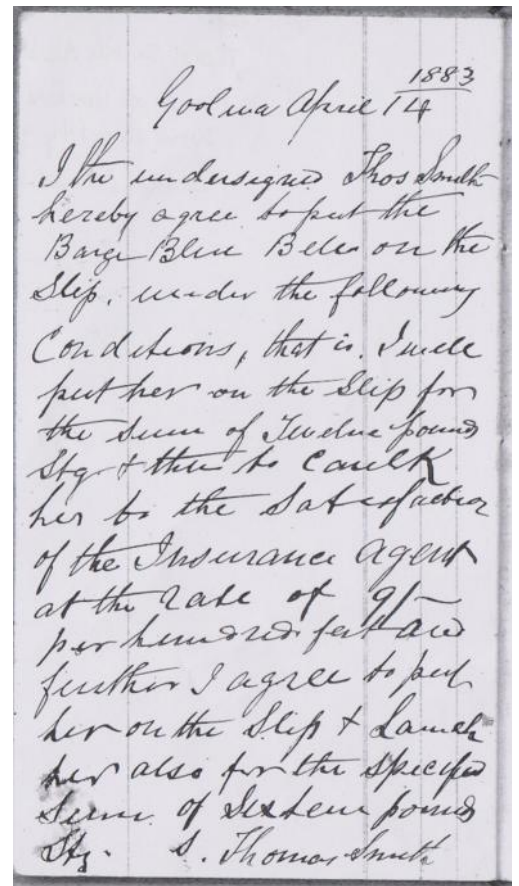
#### Summons-McConnachy v Smith

This page to the right, is an agreement to put the barge 'Blue Bell' on the slip for the sum of £12 to be caulked to the satisfaction of the Insurance Agent at the rate of nine shillings per 100ft and launch her for the specific sum of £16.

This is one of the more legible pages of Thomas Smith's notebook, which could possibly be compared with a modern person's electronic diary.

It seems Thomas Smith did not stay in the district. His only entry appears in the 1884 Directory "Smith T., shipwright, Dawson St, Goolwa." There is also mention of a "T. Smith (no address) who in 1880 owned Pt Lot 168 and Lot 324 Government Rd, Currency Creek.". Could this have been the same Thomas Smith?

Sources  
A Land Abounding p143-Rob Linn  
Ships of the Inland Rivers p 50 – Ronald Parsons  
State Library  
Walter Pretty Collection



#### Happy Researching

Genealogy help is available by appointment. Please phone the Library on 8555-7000.

Dr Peter Barclay may be available by appointment.

Volunteers are in the Goolwa Library History Room on Thursdays 10-5 to help with enquiries.

For comments, suggestions or to receive this newsletter – email [history.goolwa11@gmail.com](mailto:history.goolwa11@gmail.com)

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