

WWDHS NEWSLETTER No. 450 January– March 2022 ISSN 2207-1016

Meetings

Committee Meetings will be Zoom meetings. Notice of the date and time of the next meeting will be given in plenty of time.

General Meetings .Members will be notified of date and time and speaker for the first general meeting ASAP (it will depend on covid conditions).

COMMITTEE

President: Geoff Burch
Vice President: Geoff Haddon
Secretary: Margaret Hill
Treasurer: Geoff Burch

Committee: Tony Dunn, Margaret Nowlan-Jones, Peter Morris, Di Lovett, Rhonda Reedy, Brian Andrews, Craig Dixon, Leanne Diessel, Judy Buik Mark Christison

Welcome to new members: Bill Gammage, Geoff Neate, Pamela Clifton, Gary and Celia Suddull, Ricki-Sue King, Margaret Walsh and Anne Lorraine Lindsay.

Donations: Thank you Bronwyn Craig for the donation of an article in the Australian Women's Day and thank you Colin Cummins for a recording of a dispatch of wheat from Edmondsons.

Congratulations to member Tony Reneker on being elected as the Mayor of Leeton.

WWDHS Patron: Michael McCormack, Deputy Prime Minister

WAGGA WAGGA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. PO BOX 90, WAGGA WAGGA. 2650.

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Committee meetings: 3rd Monday of the month
General meetings: 3rd Monday of the month 7:30
Annual Subscriptions: Single: \$20, Couple: \$30.
Corporate: \$50. Due by 1 July each year. Payment by cash, cheque or direct deposit to WWDHS. BSB: 062 600. A/c No.: 0080 0270

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Digitisation of Wagga Wagga Rate Book Records, 1870-1907

NSW State Records are currently digitising the earliest Wagga Wagga Rate book records. Although it was expected to be completed by Christmas, it had been delayed. We are hoping it will be completed early this year (2022). The total cost is \$15,000. The Historical Society has contributed \$7500 and Charles Sturt University Regional Archives \$2,500 and the Royal Australian Historical Society awarded the society a grant of \$5000. The rate records from 1908 to 1949 will be digitised as a later date. All these records will be invaluable for historians and for anyone researching the history of properties, buildings and homes.

Charles Sturt University Regional Archives (CSURA)

CSURA will be moving from the CSU South Campus into the library building (lower and top floors) at Charles Sturt University's main campus this year.

Best Family Cemetery

Our president, Geoff Burch has been busy lately researching the Best Family and compiling a very thorough history of the family. and drafting designs for an interpretive sign for the Best Family Cemetery. The Historical Society holds £1400 specifically for this purpose and hopes that the Wagga Wagga City Council will assist us. He has also written an article on Marrar and its Royal Hotel. See link below

<https://www.wwdhs.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/royal-hotel-marrar-20211220-publish-low-res.pdf>

Leyland Motor Truck

The Leyland Motor Truck was manufactured by Leyland Motors Ltd about 1929 (or earlier). It has hard/solid tyres and flat bed, magneto start and had kerosene head and tail light. It was purchased by Albert Le Lievre new in 1930 and he drove it home to North Berry Jerry from Sydney, taking two days for the journey. It remained in his possession until he donated it to the Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society in 1967. It has been deaccessioned by the Historical Society and transferred to the Temora Museum.

*Right the Leyland Motor Truck at
the Museum of the Riverina*

See a short video of the Leyland Motor Truck being moved into its new home at the Temora Museum by accessing the following link.

<https://fb.watch/9iJ3-tEBpW/>



WAGGA WAGGA SWIMMING AND LIFESAVING CLUBS

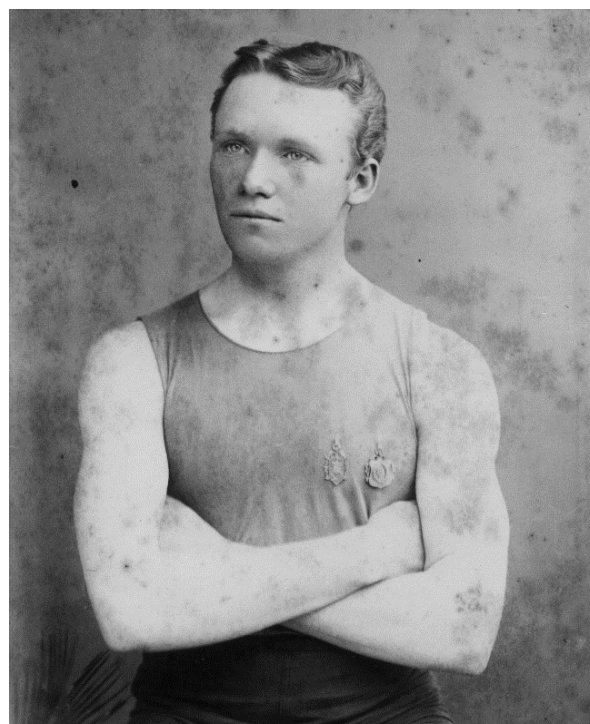
By Sherry Morris

In the 19th century, attitudes to public morality were often debated. Most people felt that public bathing in daylight hours was indecent. In some areas, beach bathing in daylight hours was prohibited and police could inflict fines for the offence. By the 1890s, although still condemned by many, others were arguing that in a warm climate repeated bathing was not merely requisite to the enjoyment of comfort but absolutely necessary for the preservation of health.

By the 1890s, the Wagga beach was becoming quite popular but mainly with men and boys while, according to the *Daily Advertiser*, women would have to sacrifice modesty and propriety if they went to the beach because there were no dressing sheds. They also found that there was often a hoodlum class who took possession of the beach and there was no-one to control them. The women usually bathed at a secluded area between the Black Swan Hotel and the Hampden Bridge.¹

WAGGA SWIMMING CLUB

Wagga Wagga Swimming Club was formed at a public meeting held on 4 November 1897 with Dr Henry Stoker in the chair. Also present were Dr J. S. Taylor and Messrs Geagham, Porter, H. Minchin, Ernie Bellair, Walter Gormly, Lawrence Gormly, Albert Monks and Thomas Swansborough. James Gormly, Member for Wagga Wagga in the Legislative Assembly, was elected as the Patron, William Orr as the President and Walter Gormly (former swimming champion of NSW) as Captain. Dr Stoker promised to donate a trophy for proficiency in the lifesaving competition.



James Gormly MLA, Patron of the Wagga Swimming Club in 1897
Walter Gormly, Captain, former Swimming Champion of NSW



WAGGA SWIMMING CLUB

Back row on the steps (left to right): J. Meyers, W. J. Gormly (Captain), J. Farrell, Sergeant Anderson, Dr. J. S. Taylor. Third row: H. Turner, T. Burke, A. Williams, A. E. Potts (Hon Secretary), Ernie Bellair (Hon Treasurer), J. J. Talbot, J. Scudder, E. H. Smithurst. Second row: E. Drake (Vice President), G. P. Wilson (Vice President), W. Orr (President), H. B. Jefferson (Vice President), P. Eldershaw (Vice President), Dr Thomas Burgess (Hon Doctor), J. F. McLean (Vice President). Bottom row: H. Minchin and H. Hanson. (Sydney Mail, 13 January 1900).

The members decided that the rules would be: to promote and encourage the art of swimming and lifesaving; to promote the uniformity of rules for the control and regulation of amateur swimming; to manage carnivals and race meetings, and to use the rules of NSW Amateur Swimming Association for all races and competitions. It was also agreed that the colours were to be a vivid red (cardinal colour). Subscriptions were to be 3/6 for adults, 2/- for boys under 14 and 1/- for boys under 12.

The first races under the auspices of the Wagga Swimming Club were held on 15 December 1897. All races and competitions were held under the rules of the NSW Amateur Swimming Association.²

The first swimming carnival was held in January 1899. The riverside was crowded with spectators. Like most swimming carnivals at the time, it involved novelty events as well as competitive swimming. Walter Gormly and George Farmer, a well-known Sydney swimmer, gave an entertaining display of fancy swimming. Gormly, for example, smoked a pipe under water and drank a bottle of milk. The 50 yards race for boys was won by S. Daley, the 50 yards club race by A. B. Riley and the 100 yards by Prince Barney, a very talented Aboriginal youth from Queensland.

The One Mile Amateur Championship of New South Wales was swum over the Wagga course in 1899. It was a duel between Frederick Claude Vivian ('Freddie') Lane who is pictured on the right and Harry Smith. It was won by Lane who used the 'double over arm' or 'Trudgeon Stroke'. This stroke was swimming mostly upon one side, making an overhand movement, lifting the arms alternately out of the water. It was named after English swimmer, John Trudgeon. Fred won by swimming on his left side, riding high in the water and using a small flutter movement of his legs in between a narrow scissors kick. Fred Lane was Australia's first Olympic Swimmer in 1900. He won two gold medals.³



By November 1899, Wagga Swimming Club was the largest club in the NSW Amateur Swimming Association with 150 members. By June 1900 there were 250 members. According to the Secretary, A. E. Potts, this was the largest of any similar organisation in Australia. That year Prince Barney won the Club Championship and the diving prize,⁴

In the first two years, a lot of work was done for the convenience of swimmers on the bank of the river. Diving stages, steps, a platform and springboards were erected, and several snags were removed from the course. A gallery had also been constructed, overlooking the course, to accommodate some hundreds of people. Club members, including Walter Gormly and G. Fiddes, had instructed scores of boys in the art of swimming.⁵

Carnivals were held each year and still included novelty events such as 'walking the greasy pole', kerosene tin races, egg and spoon races, obstacle races and 'all clothes races'. There were also diving contests (including the neatest header and diving for objects) polo matches and demonstrations of life saving. Occasionally a local band, either the City Concert Band conducted by E. A. Homann or the Wagga Brass Band under F. H. Philpott played at intervals. Refreshments were usually dispensed at a tent booth.⁶

By 1906, membership was declining and by March that year there were only 36 adults and 20 juveniles in the club. By January 1907 the *Wagga Wagga Advertiser* was declaring that there were only 'a mere handful of youths with two or three enthusiasts at their head'. Fortunately, the club was granted a lease of a portion of the river at the rear of the Church of England. The lease meant that the club could fence the area, make a terraced platform and charge the general public when they attended carnivals. It used any funds it raised to pay for further improvements on the bank of the river and in the river and for dressing sheds, conveniences, and starting boards in the river. In 1911, the club's second carnival for that year provided much appreciated seating and awning for spectators to shelter from the sun. There was a huge crowd including ladies that year.⁷

By 1919 Wagga Wagga Council was improving bathing facilities on the beach. It levelled the footpath from the Little Gurwood Street gates past the bowling green to the beach. It cut the steps from the ladies' dressing shed down to the beach. To prevent further destruction of the beach, Council banned the excavation and removal of fine sand from the beach. It also removed some dangerous snags and planned to erect notice boards, to use flags to make swimming boundaries, and to place water troughs in the sheds. New dressing sheds were erected 40 yards apart on a high bank where they were protected by shady trees.⁸



The seating behind the Anglican Church in Wagga Wagga next to the club's lease



A crowd at the beach during a carnival

In February 1919, an aquatic carnival was held at the beach to raise funds for the Wagga District Hospital. A large crowd attended including numerous ladies and young girls. Some walked to the beach while many country visitors arrived by cars and sulkies. Stalls, trestles, booths (including a refreshment booth) and extra dressing accommodation had been provided. Flags and decorations were prominent, and boats covered with bunting were rowed up and down the river. Wagga bands, including Wagga City Concert Band (conductor E. A. Homann) and the Wagga Brass Band provided entertainment. There were various races for girls and boys and adults including egg and spoon races. In addition, there was a race across the river with participants all fully dressed. Most popular were the slippery dip for young and old and the greasy pole competition. In the evening there was an open-air concert on an improvised stage.⁹



Above Left: The very popular slippery dip at Wagga Wagga Beach. Above right: The spectators watching the greasy pole competition at the pool behind the Church of England

Right: Preparing for the race, fully clothed, across Murrumbidgee River.



The end of the race

SOUTH WAGGA SWIMMING CLUB

South Wagga Swimming Club was formed in February 1915 at a meeting of 26 residents interested in the control of the railway bridge bathing area. The president, John Joseph Curley who owned a newsagency and stationery store, and Vice President, William Stoppelbein (from J. C. Stoppelbein and Co) were both members of the Eight Hour Day Association and the Political Labor League. Benjamin Box, who was a member of many local organisations including the Wagga Political Labor League for many years, was treasurer. He was also strongly in favour of mixed bathing at the Wagga Wagga Beach. His son, Henry George (Harry) Box, a clerk at Council Chambers, was the secretary. The club already had at its disposal two tents for men and boys and one tent for the ladies.¹⁰

The South Wagga Swimming Club bathing site (Viaduct Beach) became a popular resort. In January 1916 the club decided to use the money raised from subscriptions and from a successful charity event on the Viaduct Beach to construct ladies' and gentlemen's dressing enclosures. By 1917, the club had erected four dressing enclosures, (one each for women, girls, men and boys). A caretaker was appointed to look after the dressing enclosures and the grounds. Lighting was later added. There was always a large attendance at the club's bathing and picnic area.

Over twenty members of the South Wagga Swimming Club were keen to teach the art of swimming to any bather who wanted to learn. In January 1919, the club participated in a state movement to teach swimming and drill on the beach and taught 110 boys and 100 girls aged between 8 and 15 in January 1919. There were also Learn to Swim campaign classes at Wagga Wagga during school holidays given by NSW Amateur Swimming Association.

South Wagga Swimming Club's Swimming Carnival was held in January 1921 in conjunction with the Catholic Young Men's Swimming Club. Swimmers from Narrandera, Albury, Sydney and Junee attended.¹¹

WAGGA VOLUNTEER LIFESAVING CLUB

By 1921, swimming was becoming one of the most popular pastimes in Wagga Wagga and the beach had become a very popular resort in the daytime as well as the evening and on weekends. Unfortunately, it was in a treacherous swimming area and there had been many drownings. Wagga Beach Life Saver Club was formed at a meeting attended by many locals and Edward T. (Ted) Walsh from the North Bondi Life Saving Club and Captain of Royal Life Saving Club (RLSC). At the suggestion of Wagga Municipal Council, the word 'Volunteer' was added to the name of the club. The president was the Mayor, Hugh Oates, and C. R. Bruce was both Secretary and Treasurer. The lifesavers, trained by Ted Walsh, patrolled the beach on each Saturday and Sunday in the summer months. By January 1922 there were 35 members, and they were patrolling from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sundays.¹²

Wagga Volunteer Life Saving Club (WVLSC) took on the responsibility of being the custodians of the Wagga Wagga beach. They patrolled the beach and rescued any swimmers in trouble. They kept the bathing sheds and the surroundings of the swimming area in tidy order. They had to help maintain law and order on the beach and were expected to suppress any larrikinism in the precincts of the area. They installed lockers in the shed and charged people two pence to lock their belongings in these lockers. This money was to help the club to pay a caretaker for watching the grounds and the sheds. The caretaker attended from 3.30 p.m. to

8.30 p.m. and rang a bell at 8.15. p.m. and 8.30 p.m. to warn swimmers that their clothes had to be removed from the lockers. Later William Arndt was Captain and held weekly classes in the Masonic Hall to instruct candidates for Bronze and Silver Medallions. Arndt, a local, had learnt to swim in the Murrumbidgee River. He had obtained his elementary and proficiency certificates and in the previous year had passed examinations entitling him to be an honorary instructor of the Royal Life Saving Society.¹³

WVLSC, like the previous clubs, organised beach carnivals. However the most memorable was the carnival on 19 January 1923 which was attended by a large crowd. There were canoe races, a relay race and swimming events as well as a prize for the best decorated boat and a sand modelling competition. Ice cream, soft drinks, sweets and fruit were for sale. However, the main attraction was the practical demonstrations in the water given by a lifesaving team from the Sydney Royal Life Saving Society. The demonstrations included methods about how to release from the clutch of a drowning person and how to assist one from the water. Electric light from the town supply had been installed in the bathing sheds, which were brilliantly illuminated that night, and a large arc lamp had been placed on the beach to illuminate the water. That night the Wagga City Concert Band entertained the crowd. There were also a blindfolded boxing exhibition and an amateur band conducting tournament. Money raised at the carnival went to a beautification scheme to level the riverbank between the ladies' and gents' sheds, for planting buffalo grass to make lawns and for the upkeep of lawns and gardens on the slope of the beach. The club was also asking council for a water supply to the dressing sheds so showers could be installed in both sheds.

In 1923 the club purchased lifebuoys, a reel and lifeline and other lifesaving apparatus. By November 1923, the men's shed was extended and showers were installed in both men's and ladies' sheds. The club was then short of funds and lacked the support of the Wagga Council. Membership had declined and few of the remaining members were qualified. In 1925, floods damaged the dressing sheds. WBLSC could no longer cope with patrolling or maintaining the sheds. In January 1926, the club collapsed. There were no lifesavers on the beach for several months, no-one to lookout for people in difficulties.¹⁴

BADGERS ATHLETIC AND LIFESAVING CLUB

After almost a year without lifesavers, in November 1926, a band of energetic members of the Badgers Athletic Club decided that they would form a lifesaving branch. They approached the Wagga Municipal Council, offering their services for rescue work if council would erect a shed for the members on duty to use as a lookout, to store their lifesaving equipment and for dressing quarters for club members; and it offered to pay half the costs. After negotiations were completed, Council agreed to provide the Club with the kiosk on the beach and extend it and make it into dressing quarters with a shower and lockers for club members.

The Patron of the Badgers Lifesaving Club was E. E. Collins (pictured right). The president was Harry Box and the secretary was C. R. Bruce, both of whom had been members of the Wagga Volunteer Lifesaving Club. C. Lauder, who was on the staff of the Wagga Wagga High School, had a Lifesaving Medallion and an instructor's certificate, was later appointed an instructor. William Arndt was appointed as assistant instructor. R. Hutchinson was elected as the Captain.¹⁵



The club was given virtual control of the Little Gurwood Street beach and the members began patrolling the beach on 14 December 1926 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sundays.¹⁶ The Badgers marked an area for non-swimmers which was to be guarded carefully by the patrols. In January the club members found that they had to dress several wounds inflicted on bathers by broken bottles, which had been thrown away by picnickers. Some bathers were severely wounded. In January 1927, the Badgers held a Beach Queen Competition with the help of the Wagga Ambulance and shared the proceeds.¹⁷ This enabled the Badgers to complete several desirable improvements. In 1927 there were 40 members in the Badgers Lifesaving Club. More than half of them were qualified lifesavers.

In August 1927, the Badgers joined the newly formed Wagga Beach Life Saving Club. According to the *Daily Advertiser*, this action aroused considerable interest and not a little controversy in Wagga sporting circles when the Badgers had to accept the name of 'Wagga Beach Life Saving Club'. Many believed that the Badgers had served the public diligently for over a year and had earned the right to keep its own name.¹⁸

WAGGA BEACH LIFE SAVING CLUB

Wagga Beach Life Saving Club (WBLSC) had been inaugurated in 1926. Many members of the former clubs joined the new club including Harry Box (South Wagga Swimming Club and Badgers), C. R. Bruce (secretary and treasurer, WVBLSC and secretary of Badgers), William Arndt (WVBLSC) and C. G. Lauder (instructor, Badgers and WVLSC). All members had at least a proficiency award in life saving and E. Bullock, A. L. Adams, N. Hoare and M. McGee had qualified for the bronze medallion. The club's costume was royal blue with three transverse gold stripes.

The lifesavers faithfully patrolled the beach and effected a number of rescues. They co-operated with Council and made many improvements to the beach. The women's shed was vastly improved. The floor outside was concreted and new showers were installed. New seats and tables were erected. Willow trees were planted from Little Gurwood Street to the beach (Willow Avenue) and electric light standards erected to light the way to the bathing area. Four powerful lights were installed by the Municipal Engineer, H. J. Chaston, to illuminate the bathing area at night. The Mayor E. E. Collins declared the night bathing season under the electric lighting scheme open and an open air concert from several of Wagga's leading entertainers followed.

Two years after the Badgers Life Saving Club joined WBLSC, the Wagga Amateur Swimming Club also joined and handed over all its assets including the boat shed and diving towers erected at the rear of the gasworks. A women's squad was also organised and practiced under the direction of Miss I. Iverach for the various awards. In 1928 pontoons were constructed and moored at both ends of the beach to make swimming and diving more interesting and to use at the start of the races. A telephone had been installed in the men's shed and proved vital when an accident occurred.

At the annual meeting in October 1928, C.G. Lauder was elected president, V. Hyde, secretary, B. Palmer, treasurer, R. Wunsch, captain, and B. Box as vice-captain. The Mayor, Alderman Day, was the patron and the Medical Officer was Dr Moran. In July 1927, the Inspector of Nuisances, Palmer, and caretaker of the dressing sheds, E. Drake, were given the responsibility of enforcing regulations regarding costumes and to suppress any indecent behaviour and indecent language and prevent males from going near the female dressing area and vice versa.¹⁹



Left: One of the pontoons used at the start of the races.

Right: WBLSC Tug of War Competition

In the 1930s, support for the WBLSC was waning. The lifesavers still patrolled the beach on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. To be qualified they had to swim 300 yards under 10 minutes, 100 yards breaststroke, freestyle and backstroke and then pass at least one of Royal Life Saving Club's tests annually. To receive an award merit, they had to swim in ordinary street attire (trousers, shirt, collar, tie, vest and socks), rescue a person and carry him or her 20 yards; they then had to swim 600 yards using three different strokes in 22 minutes, undress on the surface of the water and bring up an object weighing 5 pounds from the bottom of the river. Then they had to perform two neat dives and give an exhibition of fancy swimming plus have a thorough knowledge of the workings of hearts, lungs and blood circulation.²⁰

In the 1930s between 24 and 28 rescues were made each year. In 1933, it was estimated that each lifesaver on average patrolled the beach for about 48 hours and made 12 rescues, gave first aid to 12 people and assisted 26 people ashore. In 1932, a WBLSC team won the Roth Shield. Harry O'Brien, secretary of the club, holder of a Bronze Medallion and teacher and instructor certificates, went to Sydney to be presented with a certificate of commendation in recognition of his fine work in the interests of lifesaving.²¹

In January 1935, Roy Osmond, a member of WBLSC and lessee of the bathing sheds and kiosk, was involved in a remarkable double rescue. Mrs A. Rudd had noticed that her 14-year-old daughter, Marion, was in difficulties at the lower end of the beach where the water was very deep and there was a strong current. She was brought ashore and Osmond was resuscitating her, when Mrs Rudd realised her son aged 2½ was missing. Osmond found the boy 50 yards from where he had disappeared, held fast in a snag. He dived in, brought him to the bank and worked strenuously for some time to resuscitate him until the ambulance arrived and took over. Osmond then collapsed from his exertions. Osmond was later President of the Club and, when he retired as president in 1937, he was made a Life Member.²² He was succeeded as President by H. E. Gissing.

Carnivals were still popular. In 1931, at the carnival in aid of WBLSC and the Ambulance, the WBLSC gave a good exhibition of lifesaving drill, a pillow fight over the water, beach races, a canoe race, motor boat race and a few novelty events including fancy diving and catching the duck. In 1933, a Venetian Carnival was held at the beach to raise funds for the Wagga District Hospital, the Wagga Ambulance and beach improvements. The games included housie and lucky envelopes and WBLSC gave interesting displays as well as pillow fights and tug of war. Wagga Melody Masters Dance Band provided the entertainment in the evening.²³

In 1932, a deputation of WBLSC complained to council that the pedestrian and vehicular approaches had been neglected and should be concreted; that although the men's sheds were adequate, the ladies' dressing sheds were considered 'an absolute disgrace'; and that the men's lavatory was 'a blot on the fair name of Wagga Wagga'. In addition, more seating accommodation was required; a better water supply was necessary for laying of dust and encouraging grass to grow; and the beach needed cleaning.²⁴ Council agreed to improve the beach by raking and generally cleaning up, lopping and trimming trees and cleaning and levelling paths to the beach. It gave the club permission to roof the enclosed sunbaking area on the men's shed but at its own expense, subject to work being carried out under the supervision of the Council's Engineer. In November that year a new dressing shed for the ladies was provided and a caretaker was employed to take charge of the locker system.²⁵ The shed had been enlarged, club rooms were erected and gymnasium equipment was installed.

In the 1930s, the lifesavers were also involved in the Learn to Swim Classes in school holidays with Police, Rotary, Apex, Returned Soldiers and Legacy. In 1935 in six weeks, they taught over 200 children. From 1937 WBLSC worked with the Wagga Municipal Council and the Service Club on the Learn to Swim Campaign. Their instructors were K. Quinn, R. Lugton and J. Stephens. In the 1937-1938 holidays over 650 students were taught to swim.²⁶

By 1936, the club was in debt. The club asked Council if it could charge the public entry to a three-day carnival (as thousands of people usually attended) but council refused to give permission as then its policy was that the beach was free for everyone. The club was considering disbanding because of the lack of interest and support and appealed to the public for financial support. A public meeting was held in council chambers by Mayor, Alderman H. McDonough, to consider helping the club financially so they could continue to save lives.



Wagga Beach Life Saving Club, 1934-1935

*Back row: R. Hopkins, F. Chaston, M. Croudace, J. Chaston, K. Coulton, M. Gaffney, H. Quinn, F. Sullivan.
Middle row: F. Leck, C. McGeachie, I. Bellair, J. Spies, F. Lloyd, H. Richardson, L. Schultz, C. Best, C. Bolger.
Bottom row: C. Archer, M. Parker, W. Whiting, H. Kerr, C. E Hale, R. Robinson (Captain), W. Hopkins, H. O'Brien, A. Byrnes (treasurer). Holding the flag, cup and shield at the front: H. Bishop, E. Chaston, R. Osmond.*

During the Second World War about twenty members of the club enlisted and were serving overseas or in training. The WBLSC was assisted by a women's club which was formed in November 1943 by Helen Martin (an excellent instructor) and a number of ladies with certificates. Their objects were to learn practical methods of life saving, first aid and swimming generally, to assist the Wagga Municipal Council to improve facilities for bathers and to minimise the loss of life from drowning by providing official patrols at Wagga beach. All active members were required to pass a swimming test and qualify for the bronze medallions. These ladies held many dances to raise funds, often including 'a burlesque on Life Saving' and were rostered on patrol duty. The Wagga and Services Life Saving personnel also assisted on the weekend while a member of the Uranquinty Club helped on Wednesday afternoons. Noel Ryan was the honorary swimming instructor. In December 1944, a new dressing shed, adjoining the existing ladies' dressing shed, was provided for the Women's Beach Life Saving Club.²⁷ A carnival involving swimming and beach events was held in January 1945. The main event was a novelty race. Contestants had to run up the beach, dive into the water, swim around the diving tower and swim back to the beach and then finish with a beach sprint.²⁸



Wagga Wagga Beach Life Saving Club: Wagga Wagga Olympic swimmer, Noel Ryan, is pictured on the left in the back row. Don McKinnon and Bob Hamilton are also on the back row. Peter Bent (a former NSW junior medley champion), John Day and Tom Johnson are in the front row.

By the 1940s or 1950s, Noel Ryan, the iron man of swimming, one of Australia's greatest surf and still water swimmers and a fine sportsman, was a member of the club. He was a versatile swimmer but particularly enjoyed long distance events. He competed in the 1932 Summer Olympics and in the British Empire Games in 1930 and 1934. He won four gold medals in the Empire Games. He also won 16 Australian Championships and 27 NSW titles. He moved to Wagga Wagga in 1943 to work as a bank officer. He still participated in various championships in Sydney, Wagga Wagga, West Wyalong and Cootamundra. He was President of the WBLSC from 1947 until 1952. He was made a life member in 1952.²⁹



Left: March Past team in the 1950s. Right: Lifeguard on duty at the Wagga Beach.

By the 1950s, WBLSC was finding it difficult to have enough members to patrol the beach area and the beach was often closed. After the Wagga Baths was built in Morgan Street in 1953, WBLSC moved its headquarters to the Baths and changed its name to Wagga Amateur Swimming and Life Saving Club. It did continue as a club until the 1960s and eventually disbanded in December 1971.

¹ *Influential Communicator*, 14-19 October 1991, p.33; *Daily Advertiser (DA)*, 16 January 1913, 29 December 1913.

² *Wagga Wagga Advertiser (WWA)*, 4 November 1897, 6 November 1897, 6 December 1897.

³ *WWA*, 28 January 1899; G. P. Walsh, 'Fred Claude Vivian Lane', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 9, 1983.

⁴ *WWA*, 14 November 1899, 7 June 1900, 24 November 1900, 22 January 1901, 6 February 1900, 14 February 1901.

⁵ *The Sydney Mail and New South Wales Advertiser*, 13 January 1900, p.95; *Wagga Wagga Express (WWE)*, 13 January 1900.

⁶ *WWA*, 1 February 1902, 12 February 1903, 10 March 1904, 25 January 1906, 11 June 1906, 24 November 1906.

⁷ *WWA*, 6 November 1897, 6 February 1906, 8 January 1910; *DA*, 28 January 1911.

⁸ *DA*, 25 January 1917, 16 February 1917, 17 February 1917, 24 January 1919, 6 February 1919.

⁹ *DA*, 13 February 1919.

¹⁰ *DA*, 3 February 1915 (meeting), 10 January 1915, 12 May 1914, 3 February 1915, 30 April 1915, 18 January 1916, 12 May 1916, 13 January 1917, 30 January 1917, 4 May 1917, 23 May 1917; and letter to editor from 'One Who Knows' (Ben Box), *DA*, 20 January 1915.

¹¹ *DA*, 6 January 1916, 12 January 1916, 17 February 1916, 12 June 1916, 23 January 1917, 20 January 1915.

¹² *DA*, 19 January 1922, 13 December 1922, 5 January 1923, 12 January 1923.

¹³ *Daily Express*, 12 January 1924.

¹⁴ *DA*, 17 January 1923, 13 December 1923, 23 December 1924.

¹⁵ *DA*, 12 November 1926, 2 December 1926, 10 December 1926, 6 December 1926, 10 December 1926, 15 December 1926, 4 January 1927.

¹⁶ *DA*, 20 December 1926, 4 January 1927.

¹⁷ *WWE*, 9 March 1935.

¹⁸ *DA*, 15 December 1926, 13 August 1927.

¹⁹ *DA*, 24 July 1927, 13 August 1927, 15 November 1927, 7 December 1927, 9 March 1928, 11 October 1928, 18 December 1929, 7 April 1961.

²⁰ *WWE*, 9 March 1935.

²¹ *DA*, 15 June 1932; *WWE*, 30 September 1933.

²² *DA*, 19 January 1935, 2 October 1937; *WWE*, 19 January 1935.

²³ *WWE*, 26 December 1931, 30 December 1933.

²⁴ *WWE*, 9 January 1932.

²⁵ *DA*, 6 February 1932, 20 February 1932, 23 July 1932, 5 November 1932.

²⁶ *DA*, 26 December 1931, 14 January 1933; *WWE*, 14 January 1933, 29 January 1935, 19 November 1938.

²⁷ *DA*, 18 October 1940, 8 October 1943, 31 October 1944, 29 November 1944, 15 December 1944, 3 February 1945.

²⁸ *DA*, 13 January 1945.

²⁹ *DA*, 6 March 1924, 10 March 1924, 23 February 1924, 7 March 1924, 11 February 1952.