

Silverton Gaol Museum

Ross Wecker

Well, there goes another year in the life of the Silverton Gaol Museum.

The end of 2018 had proved busy, as it was the Gaol's fiftieth year as a museum, not to mention getting a new veranda, having repairs to floors made, fitting some of the insulation bats and getting wheelchair accessible ramps built (these have proved a great hit with those who have used them).



The external access ramp to Silverton Gaol Museum front door

Renovation and maintenance

The 2019 season became an equally busy time with dust removal and insulation bats being fitted to the remaining rooms of the Gaol. While the removal of the dust was being carried out by one contractor, another contractor was finishing off previous repairs funded by an earlier grant.

Unfortunately, once the roofing contractors started removing the roofing iron, this allowed the wind to blow the ceiling dust into the museum rooms through the gaps in the ceiling boards. The dust then covered all the Gaol exhibits. It became a great problem for the attending volunteers in trying to keep the displays clean. Some areas had to be shut to visitors temporarily. The new roofing replacement came courtesy of the hail storms at the end of 2016 and was covered by insurance.

Restoration

The portrait of Charles Rasp that was hanging in the Hospital Room over the fireplace was restored during 2019.

The museum coordinator had picked that something was wrong with the portrait and removed it from the wall. A closer inspection was made and we then knew that the photograph would require urgent repairs, as it had been damaged by the heat and light.

The photograph was packed up and sent to Melbourne for restoration and digitising in 2020, with the help of Dr Kate Gahan, Museums Advisor for Broken Hill City Council.



The Charles Rasp photographic portrait held by Silvertown Gaol Museum, before restoration



The heat and light damage to the wall behind the Charles Rasp photograph

Acquisitions

The Silvertown Gaol Museum has long held this portrait of a very special dog.



Sailor, the 'Collecting Dog'

On Sunday, July 22, 1917, the *Barrier Miner* noted Sailor's death and his former contribution to raising local funds for the Australian soldiers of World War I:

The picture is of "Sailor", Mr. A. Slocum's dog, which was poisoned on the night of July 13, and died a lingering death. Mr. Slocum, who is a carrier and resides in

Railway Town, reared "Sailor" from a puppy. The dog was six years old, and the only time that it had been out of Broken Hill, was when it went on a very dusty day, with the Y.M.C.A to Silverton. "Sailor" was well-known to the public as the dog which performed many tricks, and carried a collecting box at patriotic gatherings. It has been the means of raising over £23 for local patriotic funds, and it was Mr. Slocum's intention to let the animal collect at the forthcoming Hospital gala. Mr. Slocum also intended going to Adelaide in September to visit the shows, and would have allowed his dog to collect for patriotic funds there if desired. He recently refused an offer of £10 for his dog, and also refused several offers of £5. Since the dog died, Mr Slocum has received many sympathetic messages and letters from Residents all over the city. He says that he cannot understand why his dog should be poisoned, as it was well-trained animal, not given to chasing or annoying people.

Towards the end of 2019, Maralyn Ellis, a former local and a relative of the Slocum family, came into the Silverton Gaol Museum and gave us two original family photos of the Albert Slocum family, both photos including their dog Sailor.



*Lily Gladys Slocum and Ruby Florence Slocum
(later Ruby Armstrong) with Sailor*

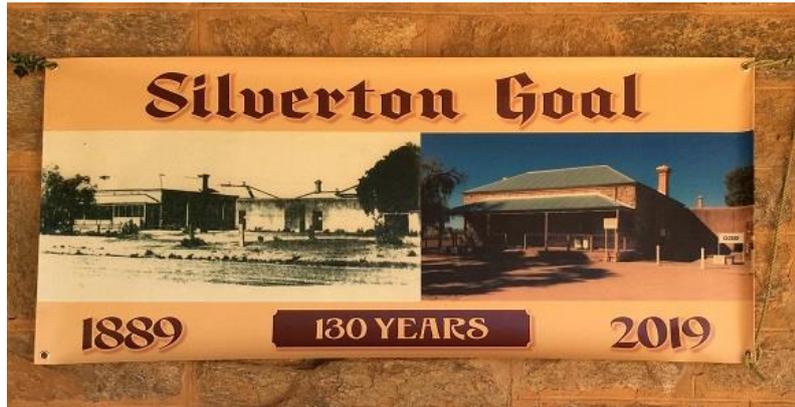


*The Albert Slocum family with Sailor the
Collecting Dog*

These photos make a very welcome addition to the Silverton Gaol Museum's record of 'Sailor, the Collecting Dog'.

Events

The highlight of the Silverton Gaol Museum year took place on Sunday the 10th of November when the Broken Hill Historical Society and the Coordinator for the Silverton Gaol Museum held celebrations for the Silverton Gaol's 130th Birthday.



Banner made especially for the 130 years celebration

There was a considerable amount of 'volunteer busyness', both preparing for the day, and throughout the day.

During the last weeks before the Sunday celebration I was able to obtain a number of much-appreciated donations from local business houses in Broken Hill, including the celebratory cake.

Jeff Summers, Marie Wecker and Ian Schipanski spent a few days with me prior to the Sunday cleaning the dust out of all the rooms, and a special thanks to you for your help.

The last week before the event was also very busy for me with interviews on all radio stations, and the *Barrier Daily Truth*, promoting the day, and my thanks to Jan Mahyuddin for arranging these interviews. Channel 7 then rang me after reading and hearing what was said about the upcoming event, and they put a small news item to air late in the week. Local ABC radio played their interview for a few days across the week before the celebration, which was great, and overall the media coverage was excellent.

It's not surprising that the day itself then went off fantastically well and a very large crowd, some 230 people, turned out for the special day.



Just some of the day's visitors crowding into the Model Room

Once the barbeque was set up, Jeff, Marie and Chris began cooking for the masses, and over the day prepared and sold some 200 sausages.



Marie Wecker, Chris Ekert and Jeff Summers at work on the sausages

Margaret Price and Jack Rice were ably in charge of the tea and coffee. Marlene Bettes worked around the Gaol assisting everyone that needed help while also talking with visitors about the Silverton Township, and Sandra Haywood was kept very busy at the entrance taking monies from the large number of visitors who came through the door.



At one o'clock I welcomed the Society President Jim Daly and Deputy-Mayor Christine Adams and asked them to make their speeches. When these had finished Jim and Christine cut the cake, which was then handed out with the help of Margaret.

The cake was delicious, met with everyone's approval, and we had just enough to pass around.

I would like to thank again all Society members who were able to assist with the preparations and running of their areas for the event; your help made it a great day.

I had spoken during the day to visitors who, even though living in Broken Hill had never ever been to the Gaol, and had found it a fantastic place. Events like the Silverton Gaol's 130 years celebration certainly can help attract many more visitors to the Society's museums.

About the author: Ross Wecker is a Broken Hill Historical Society member who became the Silverton Gaol Museum Coordinator in late 2017. Ross has had a life-time interest in history generally, and in local history particularly.