

# PLOD ESSAY: SPECIAL PERSONAL ITEMS

## SAM GATTO:

When I first arrived back to Wonthaggi in 2000, one of the Wilson boys said to me, “I’ve wanted to say this to you for a long time, Sam. Your Dad’s shed was just magic to us all. It was great to go there and see your dad making this cheese and we would watch everything he did and then after he took the cheese out and put it on the fire and the cheese would set into a hard ball and we would eat it all ourselves. And then we would look at the salami hanging off the rafters and then it was magic to go home with some of your dad’s cheese.”



My father started making cheese when he was very, very young in Italy and he continued making cheese almost to the end of his life. Here, I have one of the cheese forms he made himself. He would weave it, put it all together, big ones small ones. This one of three that he made: I pinched this one from my brother to show you because it reminds me of my father. He made so much cheese that at one stage he had eight cows for the milk from which to make the

cheese that went all over the place, even all the way to Brisbane. He was an artisan cheese maker and none better than my father. I can say that. There is none better. In fact, the Archies Creek Butter Factory came and asked him to work for them to make his cheese. But, of course the cheese he made was all hand pressed. He calculated the pressure in his hand as he packed the cheese in the baskets so it would come out with perfect texture and creaminess. With the ricotta when you’re doing it, if you boil it too much it becomes hard, if you don’t wait for the right time it becomes soft. So you wait. I can still see my Dad with a big stick that he put in the caldron to test the quality of the thickness of the cheese and then he would know. But he could never tell you how he knew. He said it was magic.

## JACK MOYLE:



I’ve something that must be more than 100 years old. Dad brought it home from France after WWI. He was gassed over there, and spent his 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> birthdays at the front, but he managed to come home with this belt loaded with badges and buttons that came from the battlefields in France. He wore it over there. When he came back from the war, his family had come down from the gold mines up north to Wonthaggi and his younger brother was working in the mines. My father tried to go underground, but after being in France, all

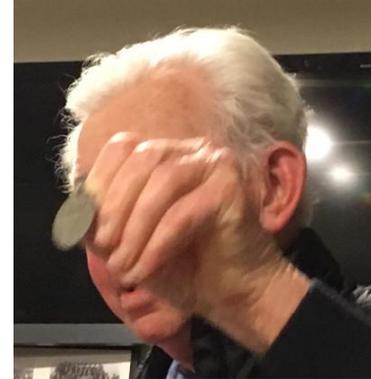
he could think about was the horror of the war especially when the shots would go off down the mine to loosen the coal. He said he couldn’t hack it. In due course he began carting firewood and in 1924 P J Smith gave Dad his first job as a carrier and from 1924, the railways hired him to carry freight to the different places in the area. So, I’ve got ledgers that show what he carried from that time right through the whole time he was in business. Mother was a meticulous bookkeeper. The entries are all handwritten and every entry has got the names of all the people he delivered to. Fifty-odd years of record keeping. Its amazing how much stuff he delivered: Hundreds and hundreds of bags of every sort of farm implement, footwear, fodder, machinery, produce, hardware,



clothing, tobacco, confectionary, liquor and wine, drapery, gas, butchery, green grocery. Anything that was bought or sold. The names in these ledgers tell the history of this town. They are a gold mine for any historian.

**LAURIE CULPH:**

My item contains history. This is the dog tag that my grandfather wore when he was on the HMAS Sydney during the first World War. He was a stoker on the battleship. A stoker shovelled the coal into the ship boiler to keep the steam engine going. I am told that in battle they are locked into the boiler room and can't get out. He was on Sydney when they received a call from a communication station on the Cocos Islands, which was being attacked by the crew of a German light raider who were trying to destroy the station which relayed information to Australia. The Sydney engaged the enemy and they managed to destroy the ship, but the Sydney was damaged and later destroyed itself. So, this is his dog-tag. I am showing you this as an introduction to him. He was from North-eastern Victoria and he worked on the goldfields. Before he went to war, he was married and had two children, a boy who was my father, and a girl. When my grandfather returned from the war, he found it difficult to get employment – as did many of the returned servicemen – so he took it upon himself to venture across the Dividing Range to Yallourn where they were beginning the great brown coal venture. He was a boilermaker and worked on construction in the mine. By this time my father was old enough to work and my father called him over to work with him in Yallourn as a striker. So my grandfather was the blacksmith moulding the molten steel and my father had to swing the hammer and pound it into shape according to my grandfather's instructions. They both worked in the same workshop while the mine was being built and they remained there through its operation. My father remained in that same workshop for his whole working life even after my grandfather died. He retired just before the plant was shut down. When my father met my mother she was working in the fancy Yallourn Hotel and they got married. They had a boy and that boy is standing in front of you holding his grandfather's dog tag from WWI.



**BARBARA HALLETT:**

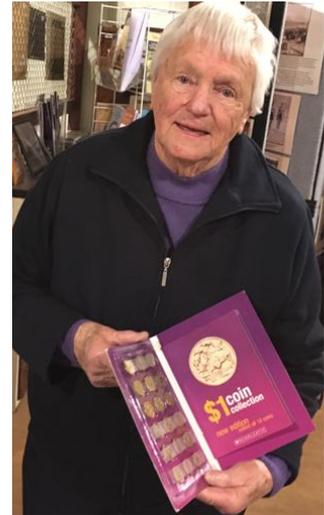


It's only little but it means a lot to me. This little bell has been used by members of our family for five generations. If anyone was ever sick in our family, my father's family, this little bell would come out and was left next to the sick bed. And whenever you needed help you could ring the bell and Mum, or whoever was out in the kitchen, would come in to look after you. The sick person always knew that someone was out in the house and if they rang the bell someone would come. This bell and its use goes back to the time of my great grandmother. It's a real brass one. I think it must be about 100 years old. My grandmother used it for my father whenever he was ill. I remember when I had the mumps very badly, my grandmother came to stay to look after me and she left the bell for me to use. I am waiting to pass this onto the next generation. Luckily

my grandchildren haven't needed it yet, but I am sure it will come in handy one day. So that's my story

**EDITH DOWSON:**

I just brought my coin collection. This is a sample of my dollar coin collection. The two-dollar collection. This in an album with 20¢ and 50¢ for my grandchildren and great grandchildren. I was once able to collect every new issue ever year when we were in business, but the collecting has slowed down now.



**BARBARA ROBERTSON:**



I have some Girl Guides uniforms from the 1960s donated by old Wonthaggiens, also a cookery apron made by the students for their classes at the Tech.

Now, I have something here that belonged to my great grandfather. It is a little tiny inkwell. This is what my grandmother brought with her when she arrived in Australia in 1923. This came from Wales. It is way over 100 years old. One other thing I have is the invitation to attend the world premier of the film *Strike Bound* in Wonthaggi.

**NOLA THORPE:**

In Joe Morgan's *Living in the Best Times, Stories of Life in Hedley, Welshpool and Beyond*,



there is a little story about John Colgate, who was my great-great-grandfather. "John Colgate and Joe's mother came across from Walhalla where he drove the steam engine for the long tunnel line. He managed the little cheese factory in Welshpool and the butter factory in Alberton. One time the engine drivers went on strike, leaving the farmers unable to send their produce to Melbourne by train. John knowing about steam engines went to where the train lay idle. He stoked it up and drove it to Melbourne. He was presented with a gold medal with a ruby in the centre for that heroic action. It was supposed to be handed down to the males in the family, but the one son died and so Joe's mother got the medal and she made it into a brooch, which got handed down and down. Joe

thinks some of his nieces or cousin near Korumburra have it now."

Well, I've got it now. (Nola produces the brooch) It's just a gold medallion, but an antique dealer told me it was worth over \$1200.

