



# ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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MARCH 2014

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## REPORT ON FEBRUARY MEETING (12.2.2014)

Seventy members and guests filled Banksia A Room at the Commercial Club for the February meeting. Many of the guests had an association with the Moresby Park Preschool and set the scene for the presentation compered by Jan Hunter and featuring three speakers, Heather Heinjus, Val Symons and Jenny Ruming.

Marion Taylor made the second presentation. She gave a brief history of the Table Top area, then spoke about the Table Top Collection and how it ended up in the Albury LibraryMuseum.

In the Members' 15 minutes segment, Peter Whitbourn spoke briefly about Ray Crispin's display at Tallangatta where we plan to take an excursion on Sunday 16 March (See Details in Notices); Jean Whitla spoke about a report her grandfather, an Australian Trade Commissioner wrote in the early 1900s about the vulnerability of the fortress of Singapore to attack from the Malay Peninsula, a warning not heeded with tragic consequences four decades later. Chris McQuellin showed a photo of Dean Street taken in the 1940s showing an unidentified single storey building located on the eastern side of the Mechanics' Institute. Howard Jones suggested it was the Garrison Restroom, a temporary structure built as a recreation centre for soldiers on leave from Bonegilla and Bandiana. Chris will follow up the lead. Roma Freeman presented Chris with a cake tin of the type used to send cakes to soldiers serving overseas during the two World Wars. Chris had asked about the tin at a previous meeting (see Bulletin 540) and Roma put a notice in the CWA magazine. Chris still

**NEXT MEETING  
WEDNESDAY  
12 MARCH 2014  
7.30pm at Commercial  
Club Albury**

**Old fashioned slide  
night. Bring 5  
slides to show.**

Business meeting  
Report on research projects  
Members 15 Minutes

**Note to bringers of slides, come a few minutes early so we can load the cassette and get the slides right way up. "Spoiling the authenticity," I hear you say!**

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ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC  
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<[www.alburyhistory.org.au](http://www.alburyhistory.org.au)>

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**Meetings:** 2nd Wednesday of the month 7.30pm usually at Commercial Club Albury.

Committee meets 3rd Wednesday of the month 5.15pm at Albury LibraryMuseum.

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION**  
Single: \$25  
Family: \$33  
Corporate: \$50

Subscriptions are due 31 May. *Bulletins* will not be sent to members who have subs outstanding as at 31 August.

**Research** undertaken \$25 first hour. Enquiries in writing with \$25

wants the recipe of the Orelida Cake made by Malcolms of Albury. Michael Browne expressed his disappointment in AlburyCity's decision not to repair the waterwheel in Australia Park and the failure of the Society to protest about its loss. Chris McQuellin was able to report that council is negotiating with Towong Shire for the wheel to be relocated to Mitta Mitta near where it originated. Edward Dale advised the next meeting of the Henty and District Historical Society is to be held on Thursday 27 February at the Henty Memorial Hall.

### TABLE TOP COLLECTION

Talk by Marion Taylor

Good evening everyone, tonight I am going to talk to you about the Table Top Collection which I have recently finished cataloguing for the Albury LibraryMuseum. The major part of the Collection was given to me ten years ago by the committee who organised the Centenary Celebrations for Table Top in 1984 and published the Table Top History book. As the original committee became older and some retired and moved into Albury, they wanted the original documents and letters used to produce the book to be preserved by someone who had an interest in the history of the district. I kept everything stored away but always felt that more people should have access to these items. My problem was solved when I joined the Historical Society and Bridget introduced me to the joys of cataloguing. I contacted some of the original committee members to ask their permission and they were happy for the Collection to be handed over to the LibraryMuseum.

The committee comprising Merrick Webb (Editor of the book), Diana Gibbons, Joyce Pearse, Given Friedrich, Dot Stelling, John Sargeant, Judy O'Donoghue and David Gibbons, was formed in 1982 after it was realised that the Table Top School would celebrate its centenary in 1984. Their aim was to research the history of Table Top and to produce the book. Table Top School was originally called Yambla; actually when a School was requested for the area the name Sandy Creek was suggested. The building was finished in 1883 hence the date written on the front. Some discussion was held over whether the Centenary should be held in 1983 or 1984. But the actual school opened in 1884.

For many years I would drive past this deteriorating building and wonder what could be done to save it. The O'Donoghues, who owned the farm, were interested in preserving the building. I approached the Table Top School Principal but he was totally against the idea of moving it to the



**This is a photo from the Collection showing the Yambla School in its original position in a paddock on the property *Longlea* just off Perryman Lane. Many years earlier it had been moved closer to the farm buildings and used as a storage shed. The Centenary Committee moved it back to its original spot by dragging it with tractors down the hill on a sled I think. I believe it nearly got away on them!**

school. Several years passed, Jill Aplin wanted the Yambla School for an extra building at St John's Thurgoona. The school principal left; it was my last chance, I didn't want the old school building to leave Table Top.

I believe that this is possibly the last surviving example in NSW of a weatherboard school building from the 1880s. I lobbied the new school principal with some very convincing arguments and had the support of the P&C, Hume Shire Council and the local community.

When I received the Collection it was stored in three large plastic tubs, it took quite some time going through all the paperwork and sorting out the relevant from the irrelevant. All the photos, letters, documents and the newspaper clippings were kept. All the rusting paperclips and staples had to be removed. Some notes were written on the old roll computer paper and there was also a copy of the Table Top Talk Community Newsletter which had been roneoed off.

I would like to pay tribute to the efforts of everyone on the History Committee and especially to Judy O'Donoghue. She had numerous trips to Sydney to the Mitchell Library where she discovered many new facts about the early settlement of Table Top before 1861. We must remember that all this research was done before emails, before Trove and other internet search engines were available. Many many letters were written and received in order to get to the bottom of family histories and events.

One of my main aims in cataloguing the Collection was to make information that was not included in the book available to the public. There were a number of letters written about what it was like growing up in Table Top in the early days

from old residents who have now passed on. Now if their families are researching their family history they will have access to these letters they may not know existed.

As I worked my way through cataloguing the Collection other items from Table Top came to light including an album with a collection of photographs documenting the *Maryvale* homestead when it was first purchased by the Norske Skog Paper mill. I am happy to say that recently after many years of being unoccupied Norske Skog have finally spent some money on this early homestead and are now renting it out.

Then Jan Hunter donated a very interesting group of photographs and documents from her sister Zelma and husband Marc Falkiner. They will be a valuable resource for anyone researching the War Service Settlement Scheme after World War Two.

Marc Falkiner was one of the original soldier settlers and his documents show what these returned soldiers had to do to be eligible for going in the draw for a block. It was like a lottery with 10 blocks and 952 marbles. The blocks were mostly unfenced and with no improvements on them. The annual rent was around 150 pounds with the right to eventually purchase the freehold.

The book covers very comprehensively the history of the Table Top District. It would have been easy to focus on the famous Mitchell family at *Table Top Station* but the book gives equal importance to everyone including the railway camp families who lived in tents by the railway line for many years during the 1940s and 50s as there were not enough railway houses. The fettleers were paid low wages and had no means of transport so they could not afford to pay rent in Albury.

I will outline a very brief history of Table Top which commenced late in 1836, not long after Charles Huon the brother of Elizabeth Mitchell established the *Woodonga Run*. A man called Frederick Dutton squatted on a large area of land which centred on Table Top Mountain; this was called the *Battery Mountain Run*. After Dutton ran into financial difficulties the Run was taken up by Hobbie Elliot, then Thomas Vicars Foote who sold in 1848 to William Villeneuve Smith. Elizabeth Mitchell acquired the lease from Smith in 1851 which marked the commencement of successful ownership of *Table Top* by the Mitchell family which continued until 1934 with the death of James Mitchell's wife Sarah.

Before this date some subdivision of the property had actually occurred within the family and by open auction. In 1909 12,000 acres were split off and sold as 31 farms mostly west of the Gerogery Road, south of the village. This was really the beginning of the increase in population

of the Table Top community as opposed to the Mitchell family and their workers at the homestead, the few farms not owned by Mitchells and distinct from the town of Bowna. The families who purchased these blocks for around six pounds an acre included the Moll, Friedrich, Funk, Gorman, Briese, Scholz, Schultz and Capron families.

After Sarah Mitchell's death in 1934 the remaining 18,000 acres were sold to a Queensland grazier, Mr Francis Edward Cobbold. Mr Cobbold died childless not long after taking over the property. His will revealed an unusual bequest where he left *Table Top* to the Royal United Kingdom Beneficent Association.

This Society had been formed in 1863 with the goal to prevent destitution by providing those in poverty with a small, regular income for life. Applicants were required to be over 40, living on less than £25 a year and from the upper and middle classes. This was a time in England when there was no pension or assistance for those who had fallen on hard times. Women were particularly vulnerable if the husband died or if they became sick and unable to work. By 1960, the amount received from the Cobbold legacy in income from the property was over half a million pounds, excluding the sheep stations. Today, the F E Cobbold Trust Fund has a value of £9.3million and it is one of the largest bequests the charity has ever received.

In 1948, 8000 acres were resumed by the Commonwealth for Soldier Settlement blocks. The arrival of these new families was another landmark year for Table Top. Sporting teams were well supported, the School had improved enrolments and the Post Office and Store became a more lucrative business. The 8000 acres was cut up into 10 farms and the lucky applicants were the Wright, Cooke, Berick, Falkiner, Kiley, Johns, Thorpe, Taylor, Baynes and Casey families. When I came to Table Top in 1973 there were still seven out of the original ten soldier settlers farming on their blocks.

In 1964 the English Benevolent Society decided to sell off their Australian asset and thus after nearly thirty years of overseas ownership and managers living in the Homestead, Table Top was split up again into four properties and purchased by the Sanderson, Caldwell, Clarke and Knox families.

The Table Top History book was launched on the Easter weekend of 1984 with a busy program of events.

The Centenary Committee organised the Social Events and celebrations on Easter weekend 1984 which included:

**Saturday: Official opening and Roll Call at Table Top School;**

**Visit to *Maryvale* homestead and launch of the History Book;**

**Village procession and school picnic, tennis, arts & crafts and sky-divers;**

**Centenary Ball;**

**Sunday: Community Centre Church Service and official opening;**

**Lunch at the Table Top Cellars;**

**Afternoon Tea and fashions from yesteryear parade at Table Top homestead; and**

**Monday: Table Top Mountain climb and BBQ lunch.**

Following the climb, a certificate of achievement was presented to all who made the climb.

The certificate said:

Be it known that you are commanded, if still of sound mind and limb, to trek Table Top Mountain during the year, 25 years hence in the Year of our Lord, 2009.

*Marion showed a photograph of herself on the summit of Table Top Mountain in 2009 to prove she had complied with the injunction on the certificate.*

Over the last 40 years Table Top has changed dramatically from a farming based community to one of small, rural lifestyle blocks where often both partners work in Albury. It has been a huge challenge for the community based groups such as the Red Cross and Fire Brigade to retain and attract new members. At times the Table Top Public School has struggled for enrolments but now is a vibrant, well resourced learning environment with three teachers and an extremely active P & C. Over the last ten years we have been running community forum meetings, Xmas BBQs, Fire Brigade training days and recently a very successful monthly Food Swap and I feel we have started to regain the community spirit that was once a given amongst the farmers and their wives living in the beautiful Table Top environment.

Table Top books are available from Marion for \$10.

#### **MORESBY PARK PRESCHOOL**

**Report on a talk by Jan Hunter, Heather Heinjus, Val Symons and Jenny Ruming.**

*Jan Hunter began the presentation and showed the latest publication of the A&DHS, "Historical Notes on Moresby Park Preschool" co-authored by Heather Heinjus and Jan Hunter. Jan outlined the beginnings of the Preschool before introducing the other speakers.*

In the late forties North Albury went no further than the Pioneer Cemetery and Fallon Street. Then there were paddocks until Union Lane which was the beginning of Lavington. Waugh Road was then opened up and land either side subdivided, most streets being named after World

War II battles. Families moved in, although there were no sealed roads, footpaths or sewerage.

Tucked away in the subdivision was Moresby Park, entered from Waugh Road or Tarakan Avenue. In 1953, Albury Council set aside land in Moresby Park and gave approval for the Albury Preschool to sponsor a similar kindergarten in North Albury. At the time the only preschool in the city was Albury Preschool, then behind the police house which was later demolished for the current AlburyCity Administration building.

Somewhere after this land grant the Apex Club surveyed the area and a women's auxiliary was set up. In 1956 this group entered a queen candidate, Miss Jenny Skeen, in the Floral Festival and by December 1956 there was £1200 being held in trust for the new preschool. The Albury Preschool sponsored a public meeting to set up the kinder and a committee was elected to get a building on the site.

Interested citizens attended including representatives of service clubs who promised support and help. The community donated generously – and the building went up. The Official Opening in July 1958 was postponed owing to bad weather.

The first director was Miss Ethel Knowles and the assistant Miss Lynn Hoffman. There was a staged intake in April of 1958 with six children in the morning and 7 in the afternoon.

The Women's Auxiliary worked very hard – we are fortunate the original minute book has been preserved as it listed the small details required for every type of fundraising and the regular catering. In 2008 the preschool celebrated 50 years of operations and past staff members wrote up their memories. Lynn Hoffman remembered that at the beginning, there were small tables and chairs, homemade building blocks, some puzzles, a cubby house made by several parents, a goldfish and a wind-up gramophone with some records. A public appeal for toys was made in the newspaper. The yard was not landscaped at all and was often very muddy.

*Jan introduced Heather Heinjus who has been responsible for the detailed research of the Preschool's records which has resulted in the booklet.*

This is an exciting night. I did all the research, but I didn't know what to do next. Fortunately I made contact with Jan and we wrote the booklet which has been published by the Historical Society.

My first contact with Moresby Park was seeing the children being shepherded from the bus, past where I worked in Mate Street, all holding onto the rope. Then in 1958 I was asked to be the Moresby Park Preschool's queen candidate in the Floral Festival. The theme for our float was Snow White and the seven dwarves. My attendant and I

wore our debutante dresses and seven of the preschoolers were dressed as the dwarves. There was some concern about the dwarves falling off the float which was constructed on a truck tray. This was solved by extending their belts and tying them to the truck railing.

My next contact with the preschool was as a parent in 1965 when I joined the milk roster. In those days our names were published in the *Border Morning Mail* each week; a bit hard to imagine these days. My second child followed in 1967 and my husband Harvey was on the committee of management.

In 1973 I became assistant to the director Elizabeth Bartsch. Elizabeth and her husband Sid were amazing.

As well as being director and teacher, Elizabeth managed the cleaning, maintenance, bookkeeping and contact with parents. Sid mowed the lawns, did essential maintenance and mended toys. Office equipment was a telephone, typewriter and a Gestetner duplicating machine; on occasions, a very messy item. Elizabeth was director for 10 years. Sadly she has now passed away.

Special needs children were accepted even though there was no additional support for them. That came later with a second teacher, some funding and a part-time speech therapist.

Joanne Ross from Holbrook joined the staff and brought in a baby lamb. It was a hit with the children and followed them everywhere including inside. I remember we were always rushing after it with disinfectant to clean up. Families took turns to take it home on weekends. On the subject of animals, a farmer brought in some young goats one day and let them loose in the yard. Again the children were thrilled. After the farmer and his goats had departed we heard a bleat from the shed and sure enough there was a goat which had missed its ride home. We fed it and kept it till next day when the farmer returned for it.

One day we took the children to the nearby playground. A child fell and broke his leg. No thought of an ambulance; we lifted him gently and put him in a parent's car and took him to the hospital. That's just how things were. We were very kind to him and the parent drove slowly.

Val Symons visited Moresby Park often in her role with Department of Child and Family Welfare. One day she was in the office with Elizabeth when I came into the hall carrying 40 glasses of milk on a tray. I slipped on the shiny floor and spilled the lot. They came rushing out. I said "I'm



just creating a diversion!" Everybody laughed, especially the children. In some ways it was typical of Moresby Park, it was so much fun.

Jan then introduced Val Symons.

In 1976 I joined the Department of Child and Family Welfare (later Department of Community Services DOCS) in a newly established office in Albury. I had trained in early childhood education and had worked in preschools in the capital cities before returning to the Border as director of Bandiana Preschool. My position was a new one replacing annual

visits from a supervisor from Sydney. I remember the program at Moresby Park as exemplary, first with Elizabeth Bartsch and more recently with Jenny Ruming. More than that, it was an imaginative place and a great deal of fun; even at the expense of the milk.

In addition to my advisory role at DOCS, I had a 'policeman' one. I was the representative of the licensing department, so my job involved checking staffing, programs, facilities and record keeping. I never had any concerns with Moresby Park.

Val then introduced Jenny Ruming who joined the staff in 1980. She has been a teacher and director. These days she has stepped down from that role but still works part time as a teacher. In April of this year Jenny will have been part of Moresby Park for 34 years.

A Child's Check List brought back memories to



**'The Cage' wire meshed area enclosing the sand-pit with roof over. A secure and safe play area loved by children and staff. Sprinkler placed on roof in summer.**

me [Jenny] as it will many others here tonight. Is the child easily distracted? Do they interact well with other children? And so on. The multi-choice responses were: "No, not at all." "No." "Somewhat," and "Yes." I puzzle these days as to the difference between these responses. What was wrong with Yes or No? It probably made sense at the time.



"Balance on one foot" and "Heel and toe walk" were clearer. "Broad jump 20.5 cm" was a rather strange distance till I learned that was the length of the check sheet.

I remember my first visit to Moresby Park. Out the back I was confronted by a wired area with a shade-cloth roof. We called it 'The Cage' and it enclosed the sand pit. Confronting, but just so practical and the children were perfectly happy in it. In summer we were able to mount a sprinkler on the roof to keep it cool.

In-Service training programs showed the progression in training emphasises. The earliest reports in minutes said "Go to Albury and talk to Miss Hogan." In later years subjects included Occupational Health and Safety, Hazardous substances; music and new technology; handling heavy objects. There were even rules for running a Race Day. For a number of years we had an annual race day which was a day of family fun and we raised quite a bit of money. Of recent times this ceased because the organisation got beyond us.

I'd like to say what wonderful support we get from Albury City Council. They mow the grass and keep the grounds clean and tidy. The support we get in Albury is far above that in other regional areas; so our rates well spent.

At the beginning of each term we asked parents to supply a few items which help to keep our costs down: tissues, liquid soap refill, paper towels and toilet paper. We also ask parents to make sure their child can open his or her bag and drink and lunch containers. Often children get new items for their first day at preschool and have no idea to open them.

We encourage healthy eating with water as an alternative to juice with high sugar content, fruit

instead of sweets. Staff offer a role model which is why we have such healthy lunches.

I thank Heather and Jan for the work they have done to produce this book.

Books are available from Heather Heinjus 6025 3053 for \$10.

#### **WYMAH SCHOOL MUSEUM**

Wymah Public School is back in business 28 years after the one-teacher school closed in 1985. The old weatherboard school was officially opened as a museum on 6 November 2013. Greater Hume Council Mayor Heather Wilton said the museum provided a sense of community as a place where people could research their family history.

It was the culmination of 10 years work by volunteers from the Friends of the Wymah School Museum and fulfils the group's aim of preserving the building and the district's history. It is hoped the museum will host period costume displays and art and history exhibitions.

The museum is open on Sundays from 12pm to 4pm, or by appointment. Admission \$2. For information phone Mrs Sutherland on (02) 6020 2027.

#### **ALBURYCITY CULTURAL GRANTS**

We are pleased to have received two grants under AlburyCity Cultural Grants program for the preparation and publication of booklets on "Twenty years of Floral Festivals in Albury", and "Stuart McKenzie Logan Builder and Citizen." Jan Hunter is working with Vickie Cooper of Albury Museum and Richard Lee on these projects. Our thanks to AlburyCity.

#### **VALE VONNIE WHARTON**

One of our oldest members, and great-granddaughter of Albury's first settler Robert Brown, died at Townsville 8 February aged 95 years.

In 1979 Vonnie Wharton, nee Brown, travelled from Queensland to attend the Society's commemoration of the centenary of the death of Robert Brown, and the dedication of the restored band rotunda to his memory at the Albury Botanic Gardens.

She has always been helpful to the Society with information about the family and has enjoyed receiving the *Bulletin* over many years.

Her emails have been missed since she went into care in August last year.

*Bulletin* articles often triggered memories of her time in Albury where she was educated at St Joseph's Ladies College, or of the families she knew in her younger years in the Corowa-Mulwala area before she married and moved north.

Rest in peace, Vonnie.

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#### **Tallangatta Excursion**

Sunday 16 March, Meet at Ray Crispin's History and Heritage Museum, 63 Towong Street Tallangatta at 2 pm.

If you are so inclined take a picnic lunch to have beforehand in the park.

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