

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN



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DECEMBER 2015 **563**

REPORT ON NOVEMBER MEETING (11.11.2015)

Greg Ryan chaired our November meeting due to the serious illness of Catherine Browne, our Committee member and wife of our Chairman, Michael. Sadly, Catherine has since passed away and we know that all our members would like to pass on their sincere condolences to Michael, Megan, Gemma, James, Jill and Joe and their extended families.

Darren Eddy spoke on the significant and moving story of the return of the Unknown Soldier from France back to Australian soil. Darren had a funeral director colleague involved in the exhumation, return of the body and subsequent service in Canberra. Surprisingly there was little media interest until Qantas became involved and provided a 747 named the "Spirit of Remembrance" to bring back the coffin. Howard Jones recalled the day of the funeral clearly as he was reporting for the Border Mail at the time. It was a cold, cloudy November day in Canberra but as the coffin was placed on the stone outside the War Memorial and a diggers hat placed on top, a shaft of bright sunlight broke through the clouds hitting the casket.

Doug Hunter read a passage from his book "Albury At War" which illustrated the excitement felt on Armistice day in Albury 1918. The Albury City Band is looking for someone to write their history of the last 150 years which will be celebrated in 2017. Greg reminded members about the Xmas Party on 11 December at the Commercial Club. Please bring a \$5 gift. Merry Christmas and a safe and Happy New Year to all our members.

**NEXT MEETING
WEDNESDAY
9 DEC, 2015
7.30pm at Commercial
Club Albury**

Book Launch
The Commercial Abe
Nathan by Richard Lee

Reading from The Boer War
Letters of James Scanlon

Members Show & Tell

**ALBURY LIBRARY-
MUSEUM
SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF
ALBURY
OPENS: 28 NOVEMBER
COME ON A UNIQUE
JOURNEY
THROUGH ALBURY'S
PAST.**

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ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

<www.alburyhistory.org.au>

For your reference A&DHS account details are:

BSB 640 000 Acc No 111097776 (Albury & District Historical Society Inc)

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Honorary Life Members:
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June Shanahan, Jan Hunter.
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Ray Gear, Greg Ryan, Marion Taylor.

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Meeting Greeter: Jill Wooding
Bulletin dispatch: Richard Lee
Webmaster: Greg Ryan
Meetings: 2nd Wednesday of the
month 7.30pm usually at Commercial
Club Albury.
Committee meets 3rd Wednesday of
the month 5.15pm at the Albury
LibraryMuseum.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$25
Family: \$33
Corporate: \$50

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



Burial party at the Adelaide Cemetery just outside of Villiers Bretonneux during World War 1.

THE RETURN OF AN UNKNOWN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER

BY DARREN EDDY

The consideration of bringing home an Unknown Australian Soldier actually goes back to 1920 when the idea first originated. At the time there was great division amongst the public and soldiers associations about doing so. The NSW returned soldiers association was distinctly against the idea whereas their Victorian counterparts were in favour of it. The centre for wives and mothers of soldiers even wrote to the prime minister stating that they were not in favour of the proposal as “Westminster is the shrine of the empire and the burial there in 1920 of an unknown soldier typified the unity of spirit and the sacrifice of our race”. Even those who supported the idea could not agree on the appropriate place for the tomb saying Canberra was too far away from the major cities of Sydney and Melbourne. It was suggested that the new war memorial in Canberra have a temple of honour included for the Unknown Soldier should he be brought home from France. It would take another 73 years for this to happen.

Before we start the story of bringing home the Australian Unknown Soldier allow me to give some background to where he fought and what he experienced.

Australia had five infantry divisions of the AIF that saw action in France and Belgium, leaving Egypt in March 1916. The Unknown Soldier belonged to one of these divisions. 1 ANZAC Corps subsequently took up positions on the 7th April 1916 and for the next two and a half years the AIF participated in most of the major battles on the Western Front, earning a fearsome reputation. Although spared from the disastrous first day of the Battle of the Somme, within weeks four Australian divisions had been committed. At the Battle of Fromelles on 19 July 1916, the Australian divisions suffered 5,533 casualties in a single day. This was equivalent to the total Australian losses in the Boer War, Korean War and Vietnam War combined and if compared against the population today would equate to 26,206 casualties. The Unknown Soldier could have fought in Ypres, Menin Road, Passchendaele or Villers-Bretonneux. Wherever he fought one thing sadly would be for certain, he would be killed in action and buried at the outskirts of Villers-Bretonneux with 950 others in a cemetery that was once the battlefield.

Villers-Bretonneux became famous in 1918, when the German advance on Amiens ended in the capture of the village by their tanks and infantry on 24th April. The German attack also resulted in the first tank versus tank battle in history. Three British tanks took on three German ones in the fields south of Villers-Bretonneux. Retaking the town and the surrounding high ground was crucial to stopping the German advance. Realising this the Australians then did something not done before. They counterattacked almost immediately but at 10.00pm in darkness and without prior bombardment which was the opposite of the usual method of attack and took the Germans completely by surprise with its ferocity.

By dawn on the 25th April the 4th and 5th Australian Divisions, with units of the 8th and 18th Divisions, recaptured the whole of the village and then did something else quite unheard of. Instead of digging in and attempting to hold the town against counter attack the Australian themselves attacked and this surprising move ensured the area would remain in allied hands and the town itself would never again be taken. I was fortunate to be in Villiers Bretonneux for the 95th anniversary of this battle in 2013.

The townspeople to this day remember the Australian who liberated their town. Streets are named after Australian cities, signs are erected which say “Remember the Australians” and the local school named the Victoria School which was rebuilt in 1923 by donations from 1200 Australian school children whose fathers had been killed in the Somme to this very day has a sign hanging over the central courtyard which reads “Do Not Forget Australia” In 2009, after devastating bushfires destroyed many Victorian communities, schoolchildren from the rebuilt Villiers Bretonneux school raised funds to help rebuild one of the Victorian schools incinerated by the fires. They have never forgotten Australia.

Villiers Bretonneux is also the site of the Australian National Memorial erected to commemorate all Australian soldiers who fought in France and Belgium during the First World War. It contains 2142 graves including 609 belonging to unknown soldiers and more poignantly on its walls are inscribed the names of 10,765 Australian soldiers with no known grave.

The memorial is planted by local farmers with green and gold crops each year to coincide with Anzac Day. You will also notice an image I took of bullet holes in the outer wall of the memorial. During World War 2 the tower was used as an observation post by the allies and was on numerous times strafed by German aircraft.

As the Australian War Memorial approached its own 50th anniversary in 1991 discussions regarding the lack of a commemorative focus within the building and the evident shortcomings of the hall of memory took place. Memorial staff suggested that interring an unknown Australian soldier in the hall of memory would be the most dramatic and effective way for the memorial to mark the 75th anniversary of the end of World War I in 1993. The idea languished until mid-1992 when the memorial’s director began to embrace the concept and approach the government. It was then that the decision was made to proceed.

The Australian Funeral Directors Association was approached at that time to provide advice on the exhumation and conducting of the subsequent funeral service and through it member firms donated the sum of \$40,000 to provide the inner tomb and surroundings in the Hall of Memory.

On a bitterly cold November 2, 1993 the exhumation took place. Only three people knew the pre-determined cemetery location in France. A representative from the National War Memorial, a representative from the Australian funeral directors Association and a French government representative who were there for the exhumation. Adelaide Cemetery just outside of Villiers Bretonneux was the chosen place. Three graves were selected, grave number 13 contained the remains of an Australian Soldier, evidenced by his uniform, his regulation boots and gasmask.

The remains of that Australian soldier who died in the First World War were exhumed and placed in a specially constructed Tasmanian blackwood coffin. There were 2 coffins made which travelled to France in case of damage to one of them. This second coffin is on display at Bonegilla Army Museum.

He was one of the 23,000 Australians killed in the war to have no known grave. Except for their nationality, they could not be identified, and were buried beneath headstones bearing the words ‘An Australian soldier of the Great War, known unto God’.



After the remains were placed in the coffin it was entrusted to the French military to transfer them to the Australian National Memorial at Villiers Bretonneux for the official handover to Australia.

After the handover his journey home began. He was taken to the Menin Gate to lie in state as a tribute of deep respect from the Belgium government. From October 1914 British and Commonwealth troops began to march east through the town's eastern exit or gateway, known at the time by its French name of the Porte de Menin: The Menin Gate. In 1914 there was no building or formal gate as such, it was simply a crossing point over the moat and through the ramparts of the old town fortifications.

Leaving the city of Ypres the troops marched through this location onto the roads leading eastwards into the battlefields. Many of them would make their way along the road to Menin. For the next four years of the Great War soldiers from practically every British and Commonwealth regiment passed over this spot. Undoubtedly our unknown soldier did likewise. He lay under the grand arch which bears the names of 54,389 soldiers of Commonwealth Forces who have no known grave.

A little known fact about the Menin Lions is that they once stood guard at either side of the gate. The lions had been toppled from their plinths by the shellfire which, during the course of the war, had reduced much of the city to rubble. In 1936, the lions were donated to the Australian War Memorial by the mayor of the city of Ypres and now guard the main entrance

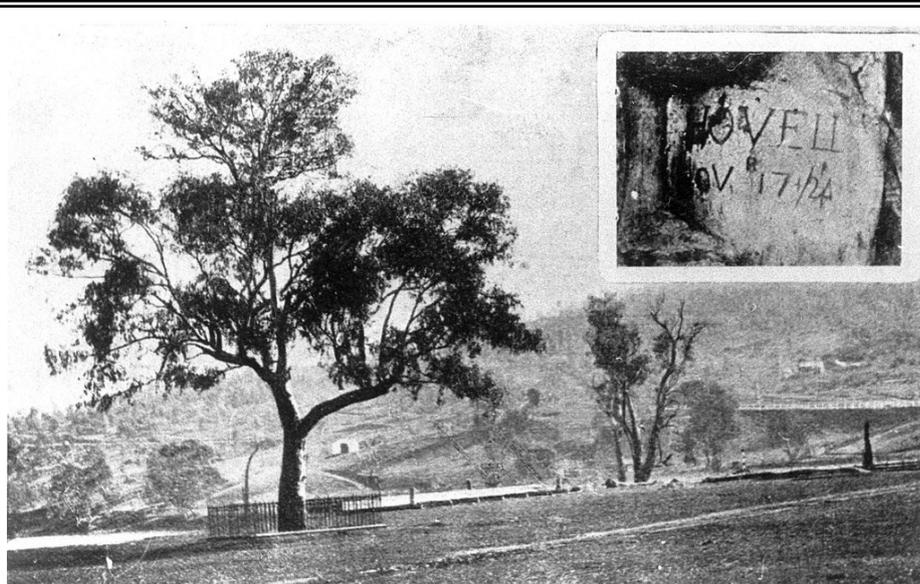
The coffin was taken to Cambrai Air Base in the north of France and was flown in a helicopter to Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris. His remains were boarded onto a specially named Qantas 747, 'The Spirit of Remembrance', for the return to Australia. Upon arrival at Sydney airport on the morning of November 7, the coffin was ceremoniously transferred through guards of honour from Australia and France onto an RAAF Hercules flight to Canberra. In Canberra he was borne on a gun carriage from the aircraft to King's Hall in the Old Parliament House, there to lie in state until the ceremonies of November 11, 1993.

The funeral for the Unknown Soldier was held on 11 November – Remembrance Day – 1993. Before proceeding to the Hall of Memory, the Unknown Soldier's coffin was placed on the Stone of Remembrance outside the Memorial where the then Prime Minister, the Hon Paul Keating, delivered the eulogy: I would like to share a part of his eulogy.

“We will never know who this Australian was. Yet he has always been among those we have honoured. We know that he was one of the 45,000 Australians who died on the Western Front, one of the 416,000 Australians who volunteered for service in World War I ... and one of the 100,000 Australians who have died in wars this century. He is all of them. And he is one of us.”

Australia's Unknown Soldier was laid to rest in the Hall of Memory, under a piece of Turkish marble. The photograph below shows the late Robert Comb, a World War I veteran, who had served in battles on the Western Front, sprinkle the coffin with soil from Pozieres, France, a place that Australian official historian Charles Bean, said "is more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth. The final words of this fellow World War 1 veteran which we don't hear before he was escorted away were “Now you're home, mate”.





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In this article an unnamed writer describes part of a journey by steamer, rail and coach of, as nearly as possible, 1700 miles in less than a fortnight from the time of leaving home.

The Sydney Morning Herald 12 July 1876.

Hovell Marked Tree
Albury
Photograph Courtesy:
State Library of South
Australia

It was nearly midnight before Albury was reached. On crossing the bridge over the Murray – a noble bridge, built on piles – we found the inevitable custom-house and we had to pull up in order that the watchful officer in charge might assure himself that we carried nothing contraband. He soon satisfied himself that we had nothing but passengers' luggage, and we were allowed to pass. A ludicrous incident now occurred. The Customs officer has a pet sheep which, strange to say, has a mortal aversion to Chinamen. While our effects were being examined a solitary Celestial had crossed the bridge and had gone on some distance ahead. Just as the omnibus moved on the pet ram caught sight of the Chinaman, ran at him full speed, butted him in the rear, and sent poor John sprawling on his face. On inquiring on Friday morning about the coach I found that there was nothing to be gained by proceeding onwards that day, as there was no train from Bowning on Saturday night; so, as there was no place on the road worth stopping at, I determined to remain a day in Albury, and interview all the lions of the border city. Beginning then with the most prominent, I went to the celebrated wine cellars of Messrs J. and T. Fallon. Mr Fallon is at present in Europe, making arrangements for a market for his wine, but I was introduced to the manager, M. Frere, a gentleman who, a few months ago, arrived from France to take charge of the important manufacture of wine in connection with Messrs Fallon's vineyards, and by whom I was most courteously received. The cellar is a large brick building of two stories, 132 feet long, by 66 feet wide. The lower story, which is partly underground, is about 15 feet in height. Here I found rows of monstrous casks, holding severally 1000, 1200, 1500, and 2000 gallons. Most of these casks are made on the spot, from mountain ash obtained from the neighbourhood of Tumbarumba. They are certainly very creditable specimens of the cooper's art. The total amount of wine now stored in these cellars is about 200,000 gallons. The vineyard of the Messrs Fallon is situated a few miles from the town. It consists of about 140 acres of vines in full bearing, the produce of which, in an average season, is about 30,000 gallons. Besides this a large quantity of must is purchased from the small vineyards, with which the district abounds, and manufactured in the cellars. No wine is allowed to leave the cellars under the age of three years. The Victorian market is shut out by reason the existing tariff, and for this reason the firm are turning their attention to Europe, and it is expected that their Verdheilo and Carbonet, with some others of the choice descriptions, require only to be introduced to European connoisseurs to ensure a plentiful demand. The same complaint is made by M. Frere that I have heard in the Hunter River vineyards, that the oppressive stringency of the distillation laws, which prevents the profitable manufacture of brandy, greatly hampers and impedes the wine-making industry. Much of the wine produced in the smaller vineyards is of too poor a quality to be blended with the better classes of wine, but would be well adapted for the manufacture of brandy. The present restrictions prevent this being done and consequently an inferior wine has to be forced into the market, which is often the cause of giving Australian wines a bad name. M. Frere is now engaged in the manufacture of champagne with every prospect of success, although the experiment has not yet been sufficiently long in operation to show conclusive results.

He is confident, however, of being able to produce an article which, if it does not rival Moët et Chandon, or Veuve Clicquot, will, at all events, hold its own with any of the second brands. Anyway it will be pure grape juice which is more than can be said for very much of the champagne to be found in this market.

The town of Albury is nicely laid out; there are about 40 miles of streets – on paper, for only a portion of them are formed as yet. There are many good buildings in the town, mostly built of brick, the public edifices being, in many cases, of granite, which abounds in the neighbourhood. There is a fine large Court House, where assizes are held twice in the year. The hotels are rather numerous and all good substantial buildings. Two are at present closed but I was assured that there is plenty of room for them, if conducted with anything like enterprise.

Albury can boast a large number of stores where an extensive business appears to be done.

There are three banks: the Commercial, Joint Stock, and Bank of New South Wales.

Of churches I noticed four. The Episcopalian Church of St Michael is a really handsome edifice of granite; it has a new organ recently imported at a cost of £750. There is a fine Roman Catholic church with a large convent; and also a Presbyterian and a Wesleyan church.

The town is very prettily situated on a verdant flat through which the Murray rolls its stream, while the surrounding hills form a back-ground to the pleasing picture. The population of the town is said to be about 3000 souls, but the whole district is thickly populated, there being an enormous number of free-selectors, vigneron, and agriculturists all round. The Murray has been snagged as far as Albury, and steamers come up in the season to a wharf which has been erected for the purpose of allowing them to land their cargoes safely. It may be remembered that this district was first explored by Messrs Hume and Hovell in the year 1824. I was shown a memorial of their visit on the flat near the river. Mr Greer has extensive wine cellars in Albury but I was unable to visit them as that gentleman was in Melbourne but I was told that his operations are on almost as extensive a scale as those of the Messrs Fallon. From the Hume memorial I could see Mr Greer's cellars, which are excavated into the side of a hill and have a large roof of red tiles. It is said that a cellar constructed in this way has the advantage of always preserving an equal temperature. There is a telegraph station of some importance at Albury and, of course, there is a post office, but the latter building is miserably small, and totally inadequate to meet the wants of so large a town as Albury. One of the principal grievances of the town is the want of a recognised standard authority as regards time. People from Wodonga keep Melbourne time, and people coming from Sydney keep Sydney time, and there is a difference of a quarter of an hour between them. Some people in Albury endeavour to keep mean time, and so a delightful confusion arises; in fact, if you make an engagement with a person for any particular hour you find it necessary to compare watches, or one will probably arrive at the rendezvous a quarter of an hour before the other. There is no Town Hall in Albury, nor any building in which public meetings can be held with the exception of a small theatre in connection with a hotel kept by Mr Lewis Jones.

I left Albury by coach for Bowning about 4 o'clock on Saturday afternoon. The weather was intensely cold at night – a sharp frost – but clear and moonlight and we bowled along at a tolerably rapid pace. It might be thought that coach travelling on a cold night would be somewhat monotonous, but this is not the case: there is plenty of incident to enliven the journey. You hold on to the utmost tension of your muscles in order to avoid being jolted out of your place. At length you get weary and begin to doze. This is dangerous for you might be pitched out, but you are soon aroused by the roof of the coach coming down violently on your head knocking your hat down over your eyes. When you have recovered from this, and begin to get drowsy again the side of the coach fetches you a sound slap on the face, which again wakes you up. Some time afterwards the opposite passenger, without any just cause or provocation, suddenly dives head-first into your waistcoat. He makes ample apologies, which you accept, and with reason, for before long you pitch headlong into him in the same manner. And so it goes on all through the weary night. Sometimes, indeed, accidents of a more serious character occur. For instance, only two nights before I took my journey, the driver of a coach fell asleep on the box and brought the coach into contact with a stump. One horse was killed and the passengers, as our jehu informed me, were “spread out all over the ground like a shepherd's blanket.” Some of them were cut and bruised but fortunately no bones were broken. These are some of the little adventures which lend a charm to travelling by coach.

This morning there was a Remembrance Day service held at St Matthews Church celebrating the end of the Great War. It was a very quiet service, but one could wonder what Armistice Day as it was called was like here in Albury ninety-seven years ago.

Rumours of the war's end were circulating wildly. Mr WH Callaghan, of the Albury branch of the AMP Society, was in Sydney on Friday 8 November and sent a telegram to the Albury Daily News saying: 'Sydney mad with joy; shops, offices and schools closed; dense crowds in the streets, bands, flags, whistles, processions galore. Te Deum.' [Te Deum laudamus = Thee Oh God we praise.]

Mr FJ Belbridge, however, in response to his telegram to the Defence Department in Melbourne, could only get: 'No official intimation yet to hand.'

Albury Police received a telegram, too. It ordered the immediate closure of all hotels, wine cellars, registered clubs, and wine and spirit merchants for 8 November. Sergeant Kersley of Albury Police also warned against the use of fireworks in the streets and threatened drastic action against offenders. Churches planned a united service of thanksgiving at the showground on Sunday, provided official confirmation of the armistice had been received.

It had not, but suddenly at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 11 November, Alderman Henry Davies appeared on the balcony of the Town Hall, clutching a telegram addressed to the Albury Daily News, shouting to the startled passers-by that the armistice had been signed and the war was over.

Within half an hour of Alderman Davies' announcement from the Town Hall balcony, Dean Street was 'thronged with an excited, enthusiastic, cheering multitude'. According to the Albury Daily News of Tuesday 12 November:

The demonstrating lasted until midnight, and never in the history of Albury has such a pandemonium been heard. Bells were tolled, railway engines shrieked, gongs were beaten, tin can bands were organised and cheers and the singing of patriotic songs added to the clamour and excitement. The Albury Town Band took a prominent part in the proceedings, and martial and patriotic music was a feature of the demonstration. It was quite impossible to hold any official ceremony, and the Mayor (Alderman W Cleaver Woods), who mounted the official recruiting stand at the Globe corner, quickly realised that speechifying was out of the question. After briefly confirming the good news, the Mayor called for cheers for King and Country, and for the great personages of the war, which were lustily given.

The Armistice was agreed at 5:00 a.m. on 11 November, to come into effect at 11:00 a.m. Paris time, which was 12:00 noon German time, so the often quoted eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month was perhaps more accident than design.

Why did the news of the Armistice come so late in the day to Albury?

Firstly the time of the announcement in London and secondly the time difference between London/Paris time and Eastern Standard time, a difference of 9 hours. Oddly enough the news did not come from British sources but rather from American. The Sydney Morning Herald received a cable from the US State Department in Washington at 7 pm and news spread from there.

THE COMMERCIAL ABE NATHAN: ALBURY'S FURNITURE KING

BY RICHARD LEE

This book by Richard Lee will be launched at our December Meeting. The Commercial Abe Nathan, Albury's Furniture King tells the story of a successful furniture warehouseman who came from Prahran Victoria to Albury in 1908, continuing a sound business career using the time-payment system. Despite a devastating fire within 2 years of setting up, Abe rebuilt and recovered, expanding to Wagga where his son was manager. Generous and sociable, Abe made his mark in the town, donating to worthy causes, rescuing the Commercial Club from a precarious financial position and investing heavily in rental real estate. As age and illness took its toll, Abe sold to Maples Furniture as they expanded into New South Wales. The book includes details of Maples and Patersons Furniture at either end of Albury's main street, and Maples Albury managers branching out on their own. When Clarke Rubber Ltd took over Maples in 1979, 70 years of furniture retailing ended on what had been Nathan's Corner and then Maples' Corner.



It is with deep sadness that the Society acknowledges the passing of Catherine Browne who has been a dedicated and hard working member since joining the Committee in 2008. Over that time Catherine has served in many official positions and has also been a volunteer cataloguer for the Albury LibraryMuseum. Recently she has worked tirelessly to update our Constitution. With permission from Michael I have included an excerpt from her eulogy given at St Matthews.

“I have written this tribute to her, to tell of her love and compassion for others, her generosity, her wisdom and her ability to calm tense situations, her unending love for her family and for the capable and determined way Catherine approached life and its adversities. I have been helped by family memories and also complete strangers with their stories of how her warm smile and kind words made a difference to their lives. Some of you have known her all her life and can testify to her kindness and compassion, wicked sense of humour and zest for life.

Others will have only been touched by her briefly as you came in contact with her as your paths had crossed through different interest and community groups, like Rotaract, French language school, Group Self-build, Baranduda Lions, Kosovar refugee community support group, craft markets, school parent communities, Descendants of convicts group, yes Catherine could claim three convicts, Genealogical Society Victoria, Australian Miniature Enthusiasts Association, NZ and American Miniature groups, Westmont Aged Care, and more recently “Rights for privacy”. Catherine loved driving cars and was the proud owner of a 1944 Willys jeep. Lily, as the jeep is named went on many 4wd outings and ANZAC parades. She often jokingly remarked to friends about marrying the mechanic to keep Lily is top shape.

About eight years ago we joined the Albury and District Historical Society and were the juniors of the group. Soon afterwards when help was needed with the Minute Secretary position, Catherine immediately offered help and so began a long standing partnership with the Society with Catherine even combining the additional job of Honorary Treasurer for one year, only just retiring from the second position in May this year as her health began to fade. Christmas dinner with Society members was always a fun time.

Also around eight years ago Catherine discovered miniatures, or scale model houses for grownups and very quickly forged new friendships with Australian and NZ fellow minis. Catherine was a very capable miniaturist and her work gained praise from all quarters. All the time Catherine was an avid researcher of genealogy and assisted many others to trace their ancestors spending hours and hours looking for their elusive relatives, quite the detective. Her ability to logically trace through the records and then the excitement when there was success. Catherine was a strong believer in happiness for all and would strive to help others to be happy, family, friends and sometimes total strangers. At times this would be at enormous personal cost to herself as she tried to right the wrongs in the world. Her goal has always been to help others who were less understood for you cannot judge others as everyone has a story.

Those that recognised her spirit will know of her good work with many groups, associations and committees and this is her lasting legacy not only for us but for the whole community as well. All through her illness as it sapped her, her inner strength has kept our family together as we went from one rollercoaster ride to the next. Her determination to stay with us gave us hope for better



days ahead. Everyone else’s problem was just as important, no matter how minor. Catherine took the view that the illness was a gift to her and in return she would help others through trying times. All the time Catherine gave her immeasurable love and support to her children, Megan, Gemma and James, as only a mother can do. Catherine will live on through them.

We know of her love for her family and friends, her scrap buddies at Freemut, and fellow members of the Rainbow Sheep Club. Today, as you leave this church, do not go with heavy hearts, take with you your happy memories of her. Go with thanks, for Catherine would want us to be happy. I know her legacy will live on within us and I hope it will live on within you as well.”