

BLACK RANGE – LAVINGTON

Edited talks presented at A&DHS General Meetings.

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BLACK RANGE DIGGINGS IN THE EIGHTEEN SIXTIES

Talk by Ray Gear (presented at A&DHS General Meeting, November 2006 and reprinted from A&DHS Bulletin No 464)

On November 22, 1851, the *Goulburn Herald* reported, that the “discovery of gold in the vicinity of Albury township was causing much excitement.” Three months later however it noted, “that while hundreds were passing through town on their way from Turon diggings to Mount Alexander none were stopping.” According to the *Border Post* of June 19, 1858 while there was up to that time, “isolated instances of individual success at gold digging, no workable gold field had been opened.” Lack of adequate reward appears to have prevented to that time, a rush to the locality.

In 1860 local papers were reporting an influx of diggers to the Black Range quoting “Some thirty Europeans besides a number of Chinamen” there in April, in September there was reported “fifty Europeans and two hundred Chinamen,” while in October, “miners were said to be arriving daily.” This growth in population saw a tent village spring up and, a number of stores established. It was also a time that saw tensions between Europeans and Chinese because of encroachment into each others’ diggings, assaults, and robberies.

Goldfield Proclaimed

Black Range was proclaimed a gold field on December 31, 1861. To advance the finding of gold, a town meeting held in Albury on June 9, 1862 proposed and formed an ‘Albury Gold Reward Fund’ offering £880 reward. Like an earlier Gold Reward Fund that was set up in May 1860, the reward was not claimed. The reward however, according to the *Border Post* of July 16, 1862 “helped bring an end to the stipendiary system which was common in the diggings.” In this system, townspeople paid parties to work certain areas however according to the *Post*, “the system was ineffective as the party involved is likely to just keep up an appearance of work as long as their money is forthcoming regularly.”

In early 1862 a stamp battery to crush ore was erected however its use was delayed for want of rain and its operational life appeared to have been short. Its first crushing, according to the *Post* of July 9, came from the reef worked by Acton and his party. Names of other parties or people working the area mentioned in newspapers of the previous two years included Bruce, Doughty, Pettiford, Roberts and Teague.

Early mining in the Diggings consisted mainly of quartz mining however from the middle of 1862 alluvial mining became more common. On June 19, 1863, the *Post* reported that an “auriferous quartz” vein had been discovered past the Murray Valley Vineyard Company’s land which finished near the corner of what is today, Wagga and Kaitlers Road. The Murray Valley Vineyard Company was formed in 1860 and set up a 25 acre vineyard on a 640 acre site in the locality known today as ‘Quicks Hill.’ Its life however was short for by the middle of 1866 the Company has resolved to sell their property. One reason for its dissolution being “border customs which prevented the Company receiving monies it thought would be realised.”

300 at Diggings - 1865

On January 18, 1865 the *Post* reported a population of 300 at the Diggings with buildings "such as they are, scattered along the diggings for a mile or more." Eight months later the *Albury Banner* reported also a population of about "300, one third being Chinese." Wages were estimated, to be "£5 a week downwards," and buildings ranged from calico to bark and slab.

Hotel, Stores, Blacksmiths and Bakery

In early 1865 Hector McDonald opened the Empire Hotel. Other businesses in the Diggings during 1865 included a Chinese store under boss-ship of Ah Kien Mun, Barlow & Coopers store, Matthew Bock Butcher & Baker, Brady and Waite's Butcher, E A Curran Butcher, J C Middleton's Bakery and General Store, Moor's Restaurant, two or three blacksmiths shops, two boot and shoemakers plus a number of other places of business including a gambling establishment. Names of parties working in the Diggings for gold included Blackfellow's party, Denny's party, A Douglas & party, Doughty's, Kerr, Middleton's, Pettitt and Robinson & party.

Presbyterian Church Opened

On September 3, 1865 a Presbyterian Church was opened. Living conditions at the diggings were at this time being improved. According to the *Post* of September 20, tents were being replaced by "log huts and a settlement where women, children and trim gardens, were intruding into the landscape." On October 16, 1865, a school opened with twenty seven pupils.

Also in October 1865, Messrs Jennings & Davis opened their Lavington Hotel at Black Springs, near the Lavington Crushing Mill that was being erected halfway between Nailcan Gully at West Albury where gold was discovered two years earlier and the Black Range Diggings which was situated "about four miles from Albury, upon a large flat hemmed in on three sides by lofty ranges, and open towards the Murray." It was in this month also that payable gold was found at "Portuguese Gully" about two miles from the original prospector's claim.

Lavington Crushing Mill Opened

The Lavington Crushing Mill, after which the Lavington Hotel was named, was opened on November 27, 1865 at Black Springs, in front of 300 people. The engine, called 'The Lavington' was christened by the Mayoress, Mrs Blackmore. In late 1865 notification appeared in the local papers of a proposal to register "the Lavington Gold Mining Company (Limited) with a nominal capital of four thousand pounds." The manager was John Russell and the twenty shareholders listed were all from Melbourne. One shareholder was John Lavington Evans.

1500 Ounces to Sydney - 1866

With the opening of the crushing mill, stone could be crushed locally which increased profits. December 1865 saw an escort of some 1809 ounces of gold leave Albury, this, the *Banner* of December 9 announced "could be taken as nearly the whole yield of the Black Range and other gold workings since January." Eight months later in August 1866, "500 ounces was shipped to Sydney."

During 1866 returns from some of the Diggings included: 9 pennyweights to the ton at 'Danny & Kay's' reef, 12.5 pennyweights to the ton, from Doughty's 'welcome reef' while, at the 'Ethiopian reef' 1.5 ounces to the ton was achieved. In late June 1866 it was reported that at Johnston's claim, "a fortnight's work by four men produced 21 ounces, 15 pennyweights, 8 grains of gold that sold at 74 shillings per ounce bringing in £80/10/8."

[TROY WEIGHT for weighing gold: 24 grains = 1 pennyweight; 20 pennyweight = 1 ounce; 12 ounces = 1 pound; 1 ounce = 28.3 grams; 1 pound = 0.454 kg]

Towards the end of 1865 both local newspapers talked about the need for rain in the district. Water scarcity prevented the working of many claims and the working of the Lavington Crushing

Machine. Rain on January 17, 1866 was the first seen for months and according to the *Banner* of January 20, "it was hoped that the long protracted drought had been broken."

In 1866 hotel names at the Diggings in addition to the Empire Hotel included, John Barlow's Riverina Hotel and Culnan's Black Range Hotel. The Black Range Hotel which was offered for sale on June 16, was described as being "64 feet long by a depth of 26 feet, having frontage to the Main Road, in the centre of the Black Range Diggings." It was eventually "sold to a Mr Bullock for £20, the low price owing to a disputed title."

Gold Peters Out, Business Declines

On June 29, 1867 the *Banner* reported that the 'Black Range Day School' had on its roll forty children however in this year, businesses at the Diggings were beginning to decline. J C Middleton had returned to Albury, opening the Federal City Store in Townsend Street opposite the Imperial Hotel and, was offering for sale, his Empire Hotel building at the Diggings. Of greater loss was the Lavington Crushing Mill, seen by the *Banner* of September 7, 1867 as making it difficult "to prove a paying gold-field in the district." Originally costing around £5,000, it was sold for £500 and removed to Emu Creek.

New Village of Jindera

In 1867 land to the north of the Black Range was being opened up for farming and in early 1868, there were calls for part of the Black Range to be opened also. In June of that year, a Temporary Common of 7,000 acres was created. In September it was reported by the *Post* that the diggings had "gone to the bad." George Williot removed the Empire Hotel license to the new village of Jindera, opening the Jindera Hotel on October 10 and seven months later John Barlow was selling the whole of his stock in trade and his buildings including: "store, public house, three stables, piggery, outhouses etc."

Gold as a theme in the historic development of Lavington covered some six to seven decades between 1851 and into the second decade of the twentieth century. This paper gives only a brief account of one of those decades.

Principal Bibliographic Sources: *Albury Banner & Wodonga Express, Albury Border Post.*

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BLACK RANGE VILLAGE – ITS LAST DECADE

Talk by Ray Gear (presented at A&DHS General Meeting, February 2009 and reprinted from A&DHS Bulletin No 488)

A map in the *Albury Border Post* of August 31, 1900 shows Black Range, south of Kaitlers Road being part of Albury's "bid to host the Federal Capital site." This site was not to make the final list of sites for consideration which saw in late 1908, Canberra selected as the Federal Capital.

Black Range Village was centred in 1900 around, where the Public School had shifted to in 1882 shown on the map at the intersection of the Jindera Road (now Urana Road) and Bungambrawatha Creek. Within the district the Government boring operation that was commenced in 1898, to determine if deep leads existed, was nearing completion. Carrying on prospecting operations during 1900 were Messrs Moffitt, O'Donnell, Polkinghorne, Strang and the Wealands brothers.

On the June 30, 1900 the Black Range goldfield area was expanded to 20,500 acres. Two weeks earlier the first game in the Swain Trophy, a three team football competition between Jindera, Thurgoona and Black Range, who were known as the Rangers, was played. At the end of the allocated games Black Range and Thurgoona were tied, but in the playoff for the trophy the Rangers were defeated. Players who represented the Rangers included Chant, Clark, Collins, B, F & H Danes, Dow, Franklin, B Kelton, Livermore, Morton, C Pearsall, Reid, Shields and Strang.

Dry weather that began around 1897 was in 1901 still generating concern and was to extend into 1902. As a result of the long running dry, and because of water shortages, assistance from the government was sought for constructing dams and sinking wells. One grant received was "fifty pounds to construct a dam for the mining camp." Dry periods were to be experienced also in 1907 and 1909. Also experienced, in April 1901, was an earthquake that left a fissure "about a quarter of a mile" long.

Following the completion of the Government deep lead boring operation, which proved "encouraging," Crown land was offered for lease in 1901 to mine the lead area. These leases were not taken up due to cost and restrictive lease conditions. They were again advertised four years later with the same result. While mining "took a small stimulus in 1904 when Scholz and party struck a vein on the May Day line," first discovered in the early 1870s, mining activity generally continued to decline while the area under vines and orchards increased.

By 1904 the population of the area was said to be steadily increasing. In June, Peter Henry Carsten announced that he would apply for a Colonial Wine License "for a four room house, four miles from Albury fronting the Albury to Jindera Road." This application and a second application later in the year were refused on the grounds, "that the license would interfere with the good order of the district." The applicant claimed there were some 600 people within a two mile radius of the house, but this was questioned by the Licensing Court "as the electoral roll showed only 180 adults, and 150 children attended school."

Between 1904 and 1908 the various churches serving the growing congregations in the village sought to consolidate their presence. In 1904 St Mary's Catholic Church was built on land today known as 28 Carsten Street. Erected by J S Adams, it was opened by the Rev Father Griffin on June 19. In the same year, members of the Anglican population, "said to be about forty families," sought also to build a new church. Following this decision land was secured at 468 Urana Road on the corner of Schneider Street. The Methodists in the following year also "purchased for fourteen pounds" land at 472 Urana Road for a future church. To help raise funds for the building of these churches, and for various other purposes, a number of events were held which also contributed to the village's social life and feelings of community. These included: concerts, continentals, fetes, harvest festivals and sports days.

St James Anglican Church, that was designed and built by Messrs Frew and Logan, was opened by Venerable Archdeacon Simpson on December 1, 1907. Eleven months later, the Presbyterian Church purchased land on the opposite corner at 464 Urana Road as a church site #12, however it appears this land was never used for its intended purpose.

On September 30, 1904, a Black Range Cricket Club was formed with Walter Corbett, who immigrated to Australia from England around 1876, elected President. Later in the following week the Club joined the Albury Cricket Association which was formed at a meeting held on October 3. Other participating teams in the Association were Collegians, Railway, Union, Waratah and Wodonga. This association appeared however to last only one season with Black Range withdrawing from the competition at the end of the first round. Players representing Black Range during the season included Clark, L Colquhoun, Danes, Fitzgerald, Hague, J Hall,

Hoffmann, M Mills, T Miles, Mitchell, Muller, Perryman, Sawyer, Semlitzky, Wealands, Weissel and Williams.

In 1906 Black Range became part of Hume Shire Council which held its first meeting on December 5. One of the earliest matters that council was called on to deal with was a collapsed well that catered for the village's domestic requirements including some fourteen families living in bark roofed dwellings which did not have the ability to collect roof runoff. At a cost of just under £24 another well was sunk.

The prospects of the area's fruit industry, commenced in the 1890s, were seen in 1907, "as great." Orchardists mentioned in newspapers included P A Buchhorn, J Fleming and John Frauenfelder. Born in Baden, Germany in 1836, John Frauenfelder immigrated to Australia at age 8 with his parents, Johann Peter Frauenfelder, a vigneron, and Barbara (nee Kolb) Frauenfelder. A well known viticulturist, Frauenfelder, on moving to the Black Range in the late 1880s, became a "pioneer fruit grower." In particular, he devoted himself to the growing of prunes. His "Frauenfelder Prunes" became highly sought after and were marketed in "three States." He died in 1918.

The last month of 1907 saw also confirmation that Phylloxera had reached Black Range and was affecting a small vineyard of some one and a half acres. To combat this pest, bisulphide of carbon was injected into the ground and the vines destroyed. Unfortunately the pest "believed to have been brought to the district with rootings from Country Cumberland, Camden, or Victoria," continued to spread.

Mining in the Albury District was reported by the Albury Banner of May 14, 1909 to be "on the wane." A month earlier the Border Morning Mail submitted that "while many experts consider the whole country around Albury contains gold and other minerals, there has never been capital available to sink for the reefs." Names of parties or people working at Black Range mentioned in newspapers of the previous years included Danes & Neil, Thomas Miles & Party, Moffit & Party, O'Donnell and Strang, Scholz and Party, G Wealands & J Baird, George Wealands & Polkinghorne and the Wealands brothers.

Frank Wealands, the eldest of four brothers working in the district, died aged 48, in January 1905. He was born in Goulburn in 1857, the son of Sydney born Thomas Wealands and Mary (nee Gallagher) Wealands. "Identified with mining work for some thirty years," he was an active member of the Anglican population holding over the years various positions in the local church including clergyman's warden in 1885, and joint secretary in 1904 with Mr Miles.

On November 18, 1908, a public meeting passed a number of resolutions seeking for the village, "a dedicated recreation reserve, a telephone connection with Albury and a renaming of the village" because of conflict, with the name Black Range and similar named localities in Australia. Names initially discussed included Lynton, Rawson and Clinton. In addition the meeting called for a Progress Association to be formed. A week later a committee was elected with Frederick Wells elected President. Wells of Wagga Road was a councillor in the first Hume Shire Council formed in 1906. He became president of the council three years later.

Wells was born in Buckland, Gloucester, England in 1861, the son of Stephen Wells, a farmer, and Elizabeth (nee Wisdome) Wells. He immigrated to Australia around 1885 and arrived in Albury via South Australia and Victoria. It was in Victoria, in 1891, that he married Elizabeth Berrill. Wells died in 1945.

Following various representations by the Progress Association, the Postmaster-General approved the name Lavington as a substitute for the name Black Range in May 1909. On June 14, 1909, Black Range as the name for a village north of Albury was, according to a local newspaper, “officially at any rate, a matter of history.”

Principal Bibliographical Sources: *Albury Banner & Wodonga Express*, *Albury Border Post*, *Albury Daily News*, *Border Morning Mail*.

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LAVINGTON: WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Talk by Jane Downing (presented at A&DHS General Meeting, May 2013 and reprinted from A&DHS Bulletin No 536)

This history was written as part of the catalogue to accompany the exhibit at the opening of the new Lavington Library. There are no claims to it being a definitive history as it was written to capture the story part of history – the many stories of the residents. Too many stories for short space – so for the catalogue we used the thread of naming to make choices of what went in and what didn’t. The talk is an even more reduced part of the story to fit the time limits.

Where is Lavington? ‘Lavington’ came to mean the area of approximately 50 square kilometres located north of Union Road, bordered by the Black Range on the western and northern sides and the Great Southern Railway to the east. Initially the township was called Black Range, until 1909 when the name changed to Lavington.

First point to remember – Lavington has a separate history to Albury, the two only amalgamated in 1962. Union Road runs east to west along the boundary between the two. Also, two themes emerged: the ongoing Indigenous story and the story of migration, shared with everywhere else in Australia. Lavington was multicultural from the beginning of the non-Indigenous story.

The Wiradjuri people called this area Bungambrawatha and the area has a history of habitation dating back at least 40,000 years. Non-Indigenous people didn’t arrive until 1824 – the first white men being the explorers Hume and Hovell. They described the Aboriginal people in the region as numerous, tall, robust and well-proportioned; a kind and inoffensive people. The tone changed when squatters took up land and it is hard to read this era without acknowledging the word invasion. By 1838 a police camp was established at Bungambrawatha to protect white residents from ‘Aborigines, escaped convicts and other criminals.’

Beginnings and Gold

The settlement coalesced into a township after 1851 when gold was found. Initially it was called Black Range, perhaps because of dark appearance of the surrounding hills. Flush with funds in the 1860s, a community hall, school, four hotels and log houses replaced the tent city and the population reached about 600. The gold never really paid however, and the dream continued on a small scale for decades.

Black Range was multicultural from the start; perhaps Darkie’s Hill Quarry was named for three African-American miners. There were many Cornish miners, and a large number of Chinese, 200 in 1860. Some stayed on after the gold was found not to pay, getting into tobacco production and market gardening. The northern end of Prune St is still called Chinaman’s Flat by older residents.

Growth and Orchards

The industry changed from gold to fruit growing, with more migrants arriving, some escaping religious persecution in Prussia, others pushed out by famine in the Rhineland. The Murray Valley Vineyard Company was established on Quicks Hill, and managed by John Frauenfelder, a Rhine-lander, He is also credited as planting the first fruit trees in Black Range. Prune Street was named to commemorate this first orchard.

The Buchhorns were also early orchardists and this remained the main source of income in the district until the end of WWI. A drought in the 1960s came as the last straw to many orchardists.

There was also sericulture – silk farming. Mulberry trees were planted, matured and some fine silk produced. Unfortunately the industry didn't continue but is remembered in the name of the crematorium and lawn cemetery. It was the name Thomas Affleck gave his mulberry farm: Glenmorus; *glen* for the valley and *morus* for mulberry trees.

As Black Range grew, so did all the business and retail to support a town. Early on there were blacksmiths, rabbit trappers, wood cutters and stone breakers and hawkers: butcher, bread, vegetables, haberdashery and ice. Perhaps these can be seen as precursors to Centro and the retail centre that is today's Lavington.

Indian hawkers used an area of what is now Jelbart Park for the cremation of their dead. A housing development nearby in the 1960s decided to use Indian names because of this. There is now a Cheyenne Drive, Sioux Court and Indiana Court. Unfortunately, the wrong Indians.

Identity in the 20th century

The town continued, and continues to be, a place of arrival for families fleeing war and persecution. It was part of Hume Shire from 1906 and transformed from a semi-rural to an officially gazetted urban area in 1947. It then survived amalgamation with Albury in 1962.

After WWI there were soldier settlement blocks in the area, and then many orchards were subdivided after WWII. The Hume Dam was a factor in re-routing the Hume Highway through Lavington. This led to new hotels, motels, business, electricity, water, sewerage. In 1957 the centenary of settlement was celebrated in style.

Migration continued; many Dutch residents arrived through Bonegilla after WW2. In 1972, the Aboriginal Families Resettlement Scheme brought more Indigenous families here.

Later that decade a more ambitious national scheme aimed to accelerate population growth. The Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation (AWDC) developed Springdale Heights to attract new residents. The Bhutanese arrivals are the latest in the long line of migration to the area.

Pride

Lavington has had a reputation for being a Struggle Town with the nicknames Lavie and Stabbington. This is the view from outside. There has in fact been a sense of community from earliest times with the schools, the churches, the many activities at the Lavington Hall, and the sports teams. The library has also been a focus for the community, with a new library opened in Griffith Road on July 12, 2013.

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