



ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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564

REPORT ON DECEMBER MEETING (09.12.2015)

President Michael welcomed members and guests to our annual December “show and tell” meeting. Michael thanked Greg for chairing the previous meeting on short notice and went on to thank the Society members for the flowers given to Catherine on her short stay in hospital and for all the cards and kind thoughts conveyed to himself and to Jill and the extended families. Catherine struggled quietly with a dreadful condition for a long time and is now at peace. Catherine will be missed by all. Jan Hunter began with an introduction to author Richard Lee who then launched his latest book, *The Commercial Abe Nathan*. Greg Ryan gave a short presentation on a recent seminar on *Destination: Australia* – sharing our post-war migrant stories that he and Ray Gear attended. (See Page 7.) As usual our members brought along an eclectic collection of items including Noel Jackling with a 2/3 replica of the Dirk Hartog plate and a medallion, Greg Ryan with a PMG call timer from the days of operator assisted trunk calls. (See Page 4.) Michael Browne showed a wooden donation collection box marked Albury District Hospital. Ron Haberfield shared bottling stories while displaying a 1931 Haberfields milk bottle. Doug Hunter then read an excerpt from the Boer War Letters of James Scanlan. The meeting was well attended and most participated in the discussions on the various objects presented. In closing Michael wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year and thanked everyone for their contributions to the evening.

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY

10 FEB, 2015

**7.30pm at Commercial
Club Albury**

The Legacy of Thomas Greenfield – a well known Albury monumental mason.

Speaker: Jan Hunter.

Abe Nathan’s photo album given to Alf Waugh which includes Albury buildings

Nathan owned.

Speaker: Richard Lee

**ALBURY LIBRARY-
MUSEUM
THE SCOTTISH DIASPORA
TAPESTRY
OPENS: 3 FEB
ACKNOWLEDGES THE
MIGRATION OF SCOTS
AND THEIR CULTURE
AROUND THE GLOBE**

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Abe Nathan
James Scanlan
Naming of Albury

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)

Patron: Patricia Gould OAM
Honorary Life Members:
Howard Jones, Helen Livsey,
June Shanahan, Jan Hunter.
Public Officer: Helen Livsey
President: Michael Browne 0428691220
Vice-President: June Shanahan
Secretary: Helen Livsey 02 6021 3671
Treasurer: Ron Haberfield
Minute Secretary: Greg Ryan
Publicity Officer: Jill Wooding
Committee: Richard Lee, Jill Wooding,
Ray Gear, Greg Ryan, Marion Taylor.

Bulletin Editor: Marion Taylor
marion.taylor7@bigpond.com
Journals, Stock: June Shanahan
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



Abe Nathan

Photograph Courtesy: Albury LibraryMuseum Collection

THE COMMERCIAL ABE NATHAN. THE FURNITURE KING. BY RICHARD LEE

My interest in Abe Nathan comes from his background in the furniture industry and his connections to the Maples Furniture Company.

My father Jeff Lee worked for Maples as a salesman and became a store manager in Glenroy, Melbourne. He subsequently transferred to their store in Burnie, Tasmania and then to the Maples store in Albury. This was one of the bigger stores in the organisation. He knew that the next move would be back to the big smoke Melbourne. Jeff didn't like that idea so he opened his own store called Gold Key Furniture in Dean Street. This store morphed into Highpoint furniture and Retravision. This business traded for 35 years in Albury Wodonga.

Before I worked in the family business I attended the Riverina College of Advanced Education in Wagga, to study Accountancy. I went looking for people to board with and selected a couple called Tom and Jill Anderson. We spoke over a period of time and Jill said she worked in a furniture store in Wagga. Then I discovered that she was the granddaughter of Abe Nathan.

Abe was born in London, England to a large Jewish family (in fact 15 Children!) he commenced working at age 12. He worked his passage to Australia. He arrived and started working with his brother Samuel in his furniture warehouse, Russell Street, Melbourne. Later Abe ran his own furniture businesses in Chapel Street, Prahran, most notably at 225 Chapel Street right in the heart of Prahran. This store still remains today.

The business thrived with the use of time payment contracts. Abe and his brother Samuel were touted as one of the first to offer the working man the ability to furnish the humble home from 2/6 per week. After making a notable start in Prahran by the early 1900's several mega stores were being built and they were taking over Prahran's furniture trade.

In 1908 at age 51 years, Abe commenced retail trade in Albury. He purchased the store on the western corner of Dean and Townsend Street in December 1909. It became known as Nathan's corner. In December 1910 his store was burnt to the ground and was one of the first of big fires in Albury around this time. With much drive he re-built the store that remains there today.

In October 1921 he sold his two expansive stores in Albury and Wagga to the Maples Furniture Co. With the sale his son Jack was made managing director of Maples NSW.

Abe was sometimes noted as the first to use 'Furniture Time Payment', although this is not technically correct. After the sale of the business and retirement ensued he turned his hand to civic duties in Albury for a short time, but ill health cut his term short. He had previously served as an Alderman in Prahran, Melbourne in the early part of the century. Not to mention he attempted to become an Alderman when he first arrived in Albury, but the heavy weights of town were unsupportive which left him unsuccessful.

Around the time Abe retired he toured around England and 'The London Evening News' declared him 'The Furniture King of Australia.' This was not absolutely accurate but the statement was already emblazoned on the exterior of his stores before he went to England. He was the penultimate salesman after all.

Abe enjoyed entertaining large gatherings and smoke socials. *Generous* was possibly his middle name and he gave to many charities. His favourite charity was hospitals; this was due to his own poor health. He was a life governor of the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne and the Albury, Wagga and Beechworth Hospitals. He also donated substantial trophies to football, cricket, shooting and swimming clubs. It is stated that he owned up to 100 homes in Albury. He had 24 on the market in 1937. Mr Colquhoun was the real estate agent and would have been rubbing his hands together. Abe was also keen on the Albury Town Band and as a younger man he acted in theatres. He was President and committee member of the Prahran Football Club and Town Band. He also held similar executive positions at the Albury Cricket Club, Swimming Club and Town Band. He assisted the Albury football premiers team and the Town Band on two separate trips to Tasmania as their spokesman. He was also a member of the Masonic Lodge in Windsor (Melbourne) and Albury.

Abe helped lift the Commercial Club out of a depressed period and laid the foundations of this Albury icon. He was President and Vice president for a good many years. His generosity in loaning money to the club helped them purchase their first building in Dean Street. A framed photograph was presented to Abe in 1929 when he was given life membership to the club. His wife was exceedingly generous and enjoyed the large social occasions put on by Abe. They had four girls and two boys. The most notable was John known as Jack Nathan who managed the Wagga store. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. He donated trophies including two Wagga Gold Cups in Racing. He was a Rotarian, President of the Chamber of Commerce, Life Governor of the Wagga Hospital and set up the Wagga Commercial Club and was to become its first president.

It is interesting to note that Abe had cousins that were the very rich and prominent Nathan's of Melbourne. That family was to set up the two largest competing furniture chains at that time in Australia, Maples and Patersons.

Benjamin Nathan Junior was to go into partnership with Fred Thomas and form Maples furniture. Benjamin's older sister Sarah married William Paterson and in turn set up the Paterson furniture business. As you may know many towns throughout Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales all had a Patersons and a Maples store in their main street. Both Companies had over 45 stores at different times. Benjamin Junior owned Ripponlea Estate and this was his home. He invested and owned The Block arcade Melbourne, built Lanes Motors and had other investments. After his death in 1935 he left over a million pounds to his two daughters. The Paterson side's most notable figure would be the well known Sir Maurice Nathan.

Abe Nathan is a fascinating figure even though rather accident prone. I will leave you to read the book to discover more about Abe Nathan.

Now I wish to thank a few people; please welcome Helen Nathan who is related to Abe & Jack. Thanks to Judith and Jeanette Anderson, Abe's Great Grand Daughters; Vicky Cooper and Emma Williams at the Albury City Library Museum; Jillian Kohlhagan; CSU Regional Archive, Wagga; Reg Considine and Jeff Lee past Managers of Maples, Members of the Albury & District Historical Society: Ray Gear, Noel Jackling, Howard Jones and Leighton Passant; also the Commercial Club.

I am also thankful to Albury City for the Community and Cultural Grants scheme which assisted greatly with the publication of this book. Thank you to Joy and my family for allowing me the time to prepare this book.

To Helen Livsey thanks for all your proof reading and your historical resources that help set up this project. To my computer technician Doug Hunter thank you and lastly but not least Jan Hunter the person that sets up the book and is my editor. If she was not involved we would not have a book here today, thank you for your work and dedication.



Nathan's Corner 1920

Photograph Courtesy: Albury LibraryMuseum

SHOW & TELL

Many members would remember making and receiving trunk calls and the telephonist asking if you would like to extend.

Greg Ryan brought in a PMG timer that telephonists would use to manually time phone calls – as each call was connected, the telephonist would flip up the lever, the clock would start, then ping every 3 minutes – the telephonist would ask “are you extending” and if so, leave the timer running. Once the call was complete, she would manually record the details to go on the subscriber's next bill. This clock came from the Wodonga telephone exchange which had 15 or more of them across the top of the console. The timer, shown on the right was made by Junghans of Germany.

Question: Why were they called trunk calls?



The December meeting seemed an appropriate occasion to read a letter written by Albury soldier James Scanlan serving in the Boer War in which he described Christmas at Enslin Camp about 1000 km north-east of Cape Town on the Western Railway which ran from Cape Town to Bulawayo in modern day Zimbabwe. The letter is contained in the recently published booklet: The Boer War letters of Albury's James Scanlan compiled by Chris McQuellin.

James Scanlan was an Albury resident prominent in military, sporting and engineering circles. He was a keen cyclist and at one time a partner with Frederick Blacklock in the manufacture of bicycles. He was a member of the 'H' Company 1st NSW Infantry Regiment, Albury's local militia unit. In October 1899 he enlisted in the NSW contingent to the Boer War arriving in Cape Town on 1 December 1899. In his post Christmas letter he wrote:

"We are still at Enslin camp with no prospect of a move, although it is currently reported that we are likely to go to the front any moment, but we are sick of hearing yarns, and the fact that we are likely to stop here for three months or shift tomorrow.

"The Gordons [Gordon Highlanders] have relieved the monotony, and their band plays every night and makes life a bit pleasant. The nights are still pleasant, and are the finest summer nights I have experienced. Of course the days are hot, if not hotter than in Albury, but one can sleep at night, and there are no mosquitoes.

"We got up a barrel of beer the other day. It was consumed in two days at 6d a pint. This is the only drink in the camp. It is a temperance man's paradise. The blacks have a camp here, with herds of goats and a few cows. They sell the milk and get good prices. There is also a large captured bullock team here, and the drivers lead the two leading bullocks with a rope over the horns. This is the way they drive them here. They walk about half as fast as our Australian teams.

"I received a Banner the other day, and saw all the latest news. I handed it around and it was in great demand. We get few papers here, and when we do they are considerably stale...

"The Gordons are going to celebrate the New Year in the old way by having a Highland Gathering. They have several footballs and bump them about with their head. Water is still our trouble, and several are in hospital with dysentery, including one from our tent. Coffee and dry bread is our breakfast, and tea four times a week. Dripping is now like Beecham's 'worth a guinea an ounce', and bread and dripping is one of our luxuries.

"The first two cooks we had we gave the sack, and they are now back in the ranks. I don't know how the new ones are going to get on.

"The flies are not nearly as bad here as at home, and this may be accounted for by the absence of trees or bushes. All our camp is well protected, and we have put in some pick and shovel work in digging trenches. The rain we have had so far is in the shape of several heavy thunderstorms.

"Our conversations usually drift to home, and it is amusing to hear the chaps saying what they will do if they ever return, and the kind of reception they expect. The Wagga boys especially expect a bumper time. I would give a small fortune to get a snapshot of myself now.

No Photographers about.

"Christmas day here was a day we looked forward to, and in honour of the occasion we decorated our tent with a few green bushes, and on top of the tent pole we fixed a small jam tin with a bunch of greens. It was the only one in the line, and it looked queer.

"Christmas Eve; I was out on observation post, about 1000 yards from the camp. It was a kind of watch, and the three of us took turns about in watching. When daylight came on Christmas day we were finished, and had the whole day to ourselves. The Captain [Legge] shouted a few little luxuries. We had a tin of jam, and a tin of salmon between two of us, a packet of cigarettes, and two small cakes of chocolate each.

“At dinner time we had a pint of beer each and a bottle of wine between the tent, which we drank and proposed the health of absent friends. The day was fairly warm, and at night a thunderstorm threatened us, but it did not rain. At tea time each man got a toddy of rum and this was the way we spent the day of the year.

“During the day we compared notes, and everyone had his little yarn to tell about where he was last Christmas Day. Next day was Boxing Day, it was intended to hold sports, but owing to the death in camp of one of the Gordons they postponed them. He was buried same day but with very little ceremony. The Gordons band played, but none of the Australian troops took part. We have been told that they are likely to stop here another six weeks, but this may be another one of the usual tales. Present appearances seem to indicate that we are likely to stop a good while longer.

“On Boxing morning Lord Methuen [Commander of the British 1st Division trying to fight their way up the railway line to relieve the sieges of Kimberly and Mafeking] wished the Boers ‘Good Morning’ by firing the big guns, which we could hear quite distinct, and when we went up on to the camp kopje [a hilltop lookout] we could see occasional clouds of smoke and dust, being the effect of bursting shells.

“These morning salutations are quite usual, and we do not take the slightest notice now, but we missed them during Xmas Day. One of the Gordons is going to fix me up with his Highland rig, viz the kilts, and I am going down the lines to give our boys a surprise....



“Robison [Alexander Robison, an Albury solicitor also serving with the NSW Infantry Company] received a letter from Pearson the photographer. Another mail in today, and no letters or paper. The Banner may turn up later. I cadged the Australasian from one of the VIC’s [Victorian Mounted Rifles], and saw a bit of news by this means. This enforced idleness is getting painful. A little brush with the Boers would be welcome and gladly too. Another three weeks of this is painful to think of. Give my regards to all inquirers.”

Chris McQuellin’s work is a fine addition to Albury history. He begins with an overview of the South African situation leading up to the war and a brief history of the conflict. Then most importantly, he compiles the collection of letters in which Scanlan describes the life and experience of a colonial soldier at war. Scanlan reveals himself to be an observant, thoughtful and competent chronicler. His letters are entertaining reading even though written 115 years ago. McQuellin enhances the story with ample maps and photographs.

James Scanlon
Photograph Courtesy: Geraldine Hocking

THE NAMING OF ALBURY

The Editor, "Albury Banner."

Sir,— I have Dr. Andrews' History of Albury, and I have been discussing with him the true origin of the name. He says, "After the village of Albury in Kent;" but it is a singular thing that a family of the name of "Albury" emigrated from Kent and settled on the Murray. I knew one of the grandchildren (now 77 years of age), who says that her father and grandfather had told her that Albury on the Murray, was named after her grandfather (John Albury), who had a farm and vineyard there. The John Albury family afterwards left Albury district (apparently between 1838 and 1845). Albury town was surveyed in 1838 by Surveyor T. S. Mitchell(sic), so Dr. Andrews' book says, and he was from Kent, and named it Albury after the Kentish village of that name, because of similar natural surroundings. Do you know of any newspaper correspondence on the subject? I am interested in all these historical questions, and did much delving when getting at the origin of the name of my own town of Tenterfield, of which I wrote a short history for its municipal jubilee in 1921.

Yours, etc., J. F. THOMAS,

Member Royal Aus. Historical Society,
64 Elizabeth-street, Sydney.

Albury Banner and Wodonga Express, Friday 14 March 1924

The Editor, "Albury Banner."

Sir, — In your issue of the 14th inst. I note a letter from a Mr. Thomas, of 64 Elizabeth-street, Sydney, regarding the naming of the town of Albury. He revives a claim, made some years ago that a "John Albury" had a farm there, hence the name. I have since been able, through the courtesy of Mr. H. Selkirk, late of the Lands Department, to make further enquiries on the subject. He writes that he searched in vain the records of the Lands Department for the name of Albury as a grantee or Crown tenant of any kind. He also, examined the actual minute book of the Executive Council of the time. He found that the design for the town was submitted by the Surveyor General to the Governor and Council, January 26th, 1839. He describes the plan as a "survey made by Assistant surveyor Townsend of the nucleus of a town at the Murray designated by the natives as 'Bungambrewattah.'" On the margin of the plan a note in pencil thus: "It must be confessed that it is not a euphonious name." On March 15 Townsend's plan for a town at Bungambrewattah was submitted to the Governor and Council under the signature of William Macpherson, clerk to the Council, in whose handwriting the name 'Bungambrewattah' is struck out and that of "Aldbury" substituted. The "D" was in the original, but crossed out. Finally, on April 13th, 1839, the plan and approval of the name 'Albury' was passed by the Council. There is nothing in the records to support John Albury's claim, and I must leave it as quite unsupported.

Yours truly, ARTHUR ANDREWS.

Sydney.

Albury Banner and Wodonga Express, Friday 4 April 1924

Many of us were either part of the post World War II migration to Australia or have relatives and/or friends who were part of the experience. The National Archives is reaching out to encourage post-war migrants to discover their family history through its website: Destination: Australia – sharing our post-war migrant stories.

Featuring over 22,000 photographs from 1946-1999, the website encourages migrants and their families to identify family and friends – or simply add stories of their own migration experiences. The photographs were used in newspapers, magazines, posters, brochures and displays to promote Australia as a prosperous welcoming nation to potential migrants and to reassure the Australian public that new migrants would readily settle into the Australian way of life.

The website can be searched by using keywords such as the name of a migrant camp (eg Bonegilla), a migrant ship, a port of entry and country of origin. Information that can be added to an image includes identity, keywords, location and comments. The user can also add a story and photographs documenting their own family's immigration experience and how they adapted to life in Australia.

The website can be found at <https://www.destinationaustralia.gov.au>

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE JOURNALS

1. The Argyle Bulletin No. 6 August 2015 and No 8 October 2015.
 - (a) More about our Lady of Mercy College Goulburn
 - (b) Education in New South Wales
 - (c) Notes on Country Schools
 - (d) Frank Gardiner. Part One.
2. Wagga Wagga and District Historical Society Newsletter No. 414
 - (a) Museum of the Riverina Exhibition - 150 Years of Dame Mary Gilmore.
 - (b) Muriel Goldsmith - Criminal or Victim
 - (c) Photos of soldiers from WW1. Newsletter No. 415
 - (d) Sherry Morris is interested to hear from anyone who was a member of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps who worked at Kapooka in the 1950's or 1960'.
3. History - Magazine of the RAHS September 2015 No. 125
 - (a) Waterloo, an Australian Battle.
Placenames Australia.
December 2015.
Brisbane city street names.
Toponymy. Part One.
5. Links 'n' Chains - Liverpool Genealogy Society Inc. No.111
6. Ances - Tree Journal of the Burwood & District Family History Group. Nov. 2015
7. Descent Society of Australian Genealogists - Dec'15.
New catalogue, MIDAS, now available. Contains many manuscripts, images and digital archive material held at their Richmond Villa premises. As an example of what might be found in this catalogue is a memoir written by Beechworth born, Arthur Newson which includes an account of conversations with Glenrowan locals a few days after the Kelly Gang siege.
8. RAHS Newsletter Jan'16.
Grant registers, Old System Vendors and Purchases Index and Torrens Purchases Index 1863 - 1971 now online at the NSW Land & Property Information website.



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NOTE THE ADDRESS.

ABE NATHAN, Nathan's Corner,

ALBURY.

WRITE FOR OUR NEW 1912 ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUE.



Find us on
Facebook

You can now find the Albury District Historical Society on Facebook.
Our webmaster Greg Ryan has been posting many unpublished photographs of significant local buildings that are sadly no longer with us.

It is not necessary to sign up for Facebook to view the page.

To view our popular page please go to <https://www.facebook.com/Albury.DHS>