

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

Registered by Australia Post PP 225170/0019

APRIL 2011

511

REPORT ON THE MARCH MEETING (9/3/11)

This was a quite extraordinary meeting. More than 60 people attended, half of whom were students from Wodonga TAFE studying for the Advanced Diploma of Architectural Building Design.

Fortunately, the Commercial Club moved us from the Elizabeth Room to the much larger Wattle Room otherwise we would not have fitted in.

Our members and guests were treated to an excellent program beginning with Jan Hunter's presentation on Albury's domestic builders and tradesmen 1920-1950. This was followed by Howard Jones speaking on stately homes in the district and finally by Phil Wilkins who used images of *Brasseurville*, a nineteenth century building adjacent to the Union Bridge, to point out construction materials and methods used.

Members' segment again proved popular with Doug Royal speaking about a project involving bulbs that were given to Albury by Holland in recognition of the part the town played in the *Uiver* landing. A number of the bulbs were planted at a house in Guinea Street and are still there today. Doug's plan is to lift some of the bulbs at the end of Autumn and store them appropriately for replanting in spring. The aim is to have a good quantity of bulbs available for the eightieth anniversary of the landing in 2014.

Pauline Harbick and Chris McQuellin are researching Chinese in Albury in preparation for a Cemetery Walk in June this year. They would appreciate any photos or other information. Jan Hunter showed several photographs. She is seeking the last few

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY

13 APRIL 2011

7.30pm at Commercial Club
Albury

Speakers: Joe Wooding
"Townsend letters Pt 2;" and
Ray Gear "Dean Street, south
side, 1915."

NSW HERITAGE WEEK ACTIVITY

Murray River Heritage Walk
Sunday 17 April 2011

12 noon to 2 p.m. BYO lunch at
Hovell Tree Park. The Wood
Fired Oven will be available.

2 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. Guided
walk along the River Path to the
Union Bridge.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Builders & Tradesmen	Page 2
Stately homes	Page 4
More on New Year fire	Page 6
A&DHS latest papers	Page 6
Fifty years ago	Page 6
Albury pictures DVD	Page 6

Patron: Harold Mair OAM

Honorary Life Members

Howard Jones, Anne Davies,
Helen Livsey,

Public Officer: Helen Livsey

President: Christopher McQuellin
02 6021 3697

Vice-Presidents: Joe Wooding, June Shanahan

Secretary: Helen Livsey 02 6021 3671

Treasurer: Michael Browne

Minute Secretary: Catherine Browne

Committee: Jill Wooding, Doug Hunter, Ray
Gear, Bridget Guthrie, Jessica May and Eric
Cossor.

Bulletin Editor: Doug Hunter 02 6021 2835
<djhjrhlaptop@bigpond.com>

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

Journals & Stock: John Craig

Membership list & Bulletin dispatch: Ray
Gear

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$25

Family: \$33

Corporate: \$50

Research undertaken \$25 first hour.

Enquiries in writing with \$25

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

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

A&DHS website:

www.alburyhistory.org.au

remaining names of Albury Council indoor staff in 1951; names and the occasion of Mate's staff c.1932; and location of several houses in Albury.

**ALBURY BUILDERS & ALLIED TRADES
CONTRACTORS C.1920-C.1960**

Extract of talk by Jan Hunter

This talk was first given at the Art Deco Symposium 2010

In 1930 Albury was a country town – the population was about 10,000 and city influences on the design and style of Albury houses took a while to filter through. When talking about this period of domestic building, we need to subtract a decade. From 1930-1936 house building in Albury slowed right down because of the Depression and another five years of house building was lost during WWII.

Building approvals were 102 in 1925, 37 in 1930, only 5 in 1931 and then rising slowly to 89 in 1936.

During WWII domestic building was put on hold or heavily restricted. Shortages continued to hamper construction after the war.

STUART LOGAN, BUILDER & BRICK-MAKER

Stuart Logan was a significant Albury figure and an influential man in the building scene. From the 1890s, in partnership with Alexander Frew, Logan built St David's Church, banks and domestic premises. When the partnership dissolved Logan continued to build show-case homes as well as humble cottages. By 1930 he was concentrating on his timber and plumbing supplies. His extensive premises had a mezzanine floor which contained the glass shop; the plumbing supplies were upstairs; there was woodwork-ing machinery in a cellar and he had a joinery shop with a large trained staff as well as apprentices.

Logan's had been making bricks since 1907. These brickworks were in David Street north,

near the cemetery. There were four kilns. Brick making then was physically demanding work and not an exact science – the qualities of the clay and firewood were not consistent, therefore the bricks could vary in colour and size.

Logan had strong opinions, but so did others, and a clash of ideas about production led one of his leading brick makers, Alan Chick to leave Logan's employment.

Jack Winnel, a long standing Albury plumber, remembered these works "going in full swing in 1931 with bricks £4/6/0 per 1000 delivered on site." Timber for the kilns came from Black Range, at Lavington. By the beginning of 1939 Logan's Brick Works had cut production from three kilns to one and it seems that the brick works closed in the early forties.

Logan laid the footings for his houses directly on the ground – even the grass was not disturbed. Rather than digging and pouring concrete then laying bricks, Logan felt that cracking would be minimized if the bricks were laid on undisturbed soil.

F A (ALAN) STOW, BUILDER

Alan Stow worked with Logans before going out on his own. He was another who built his footings directly onto the ground, not disturbing the clay sub-soil. He favoured plant-on window frames, rounded corners with courses of tapestry bricks, cantilevered concrete verandahs, narrow awnings over windows and broken hip roofs. Porches were a feature of his houses during the thirties. His interiors often featured Canadian Redwood for window sills, ornament rails and architraves.

F W (BILL) RITTWAG

Bill Rittwag learned his trade at Logan's; "from tree to finished product," he used to say. He built his own first home in the early 20s with cupboards to suit his bride's height. He also built their furniture salvaged from street trees cut down by the council.

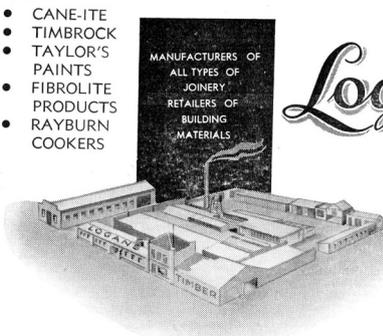
Rittwag left Logan's and went into partnership with another Logan employee, Sidney Thorman. When Thorman died in the mid thirties, Rittwag continued as a building contractor mainly in the East Albury area. Rittwag thought ventilation was important – throughout his career, house eaves were lined with chicken wire or slatted timber and plenty of vents were inserted below floor-board level.

BUILDERS' PLANS

Stow did his own plans and one of his daughters typed up the specifications. Stow had no specific office until he built his joinery shop. A common clause in these specs was, "...block to be cleared of any stumps and ground to be levelled off... Holes filled in so as no water will lodge under building."

- CANE-ITE
- TIMBROCK
- TAYLOR'S PAINTS
- FIBROLITE PRODUCTS
- RAYBURN COOKERS

MANUFACTURERS OF
ALL TYPES OF
JOINERY
RETAILERS OF
BUILDING
MATERIALS



Logans

TIMBER
and
JOINERY

SWIFT, MACAULEY and
SPENCER STREETS
ALBURY
(Near Railway)

•

Box 71, P.O. Albury, S.3
Telephones 1053, 1054

•

EVERYTHING FOR BUILDING

Logans advertisement 1954

Bill Rittwag had only one child so always used a room in his house for an office. He too did all of his own designs and his daughter said, "We always had the 'Home Beautiful' magazine in our house."

Alf Chick, who worked on commissions, used the front room of his home as an office adding another small room at the back for his sons' bedroom. His workshop was in the backyard and he did his own joinery there.

As Les Chick became established, he graduated to a workshop built on a separate block, which included a small office. He designed and drew his own plans, and hand wrote his specifications until one of his daughters learned to type.

CLAUDE PEARSALL, HARD PLASTERER

The hard plasterer who did the date on the Regent, and the name on Mate's building was Claude Pearsall; he worked on many Albury houses before enlisting in WWII, but when the war was over, he did not go back into his trade. He named his family home "Watsonia", after one of the first Army bases in Victoria and where Claude did his basic training.

Historical knowledge often just turns up and that can be quite exciting. Recently a fellow-member of the Historical Society handed me a 1938/39 ledger which belonged to his father. George (Bill) Washington was a carrier who worked steadily for local builders and subcontractors, delivering yards of gravel and sand. Included in the ledger is a record of Washington delivering



Carrier Bill Washington loading sand for delivery to a building site in Albury

like this, "Emarl".

This was a mystery to the family but not to me. "Ted" would have been Eodoro Pidutti, monumental mason, who opened up a sheet plaster works in Mate Street. Ted, along with Emil Fornasiero, emigrated from Italy in 1921. A laughing, handsome man, Eodoro was universally known as "Ted" in a community of Anglo Saxons. His Australian wife was called "Mrs Dootz." The Washington entry for "Emarl" will be "Emil Monumental Works". Fornasiero stuck to his original trade. "Pidutti" and "Fornasiero" ... "Ted" and "Emil" ... too hard to spell, or too hard to say? But both in inverted commas.

T R (DICK) FIELDER, BRICKLAYER

Thomas Richard Fielder, bricklayer, came to Albury in 1927 having worked on the federal capital buildings including The Lodge. He was referred to by Jack Winnel, as "an absolute artist." Dick Fielder did a lot of work for Stows and is remembered by them as a specialist in tapestry art and fireplaces.

Additional information on builders & tradesmen in this period can be found in the following publications, all in the Albury Library/Museum History Room:

A&DHS Papers:

No 8. *F A Stow Information and Recollections from the family*, Compiled by Jan Hunter, 2008

No 12. *Bricks and Mortar: Maurice Gulson's Working Life*, Maurice Gulson as told to Jan Hunter, 2010

No 13. *Albury Builders and Allied Trades Contractors c.1900-c.1960*, Compiled by Jan Hunter, 2011

No 15. *Frederick William Lemcke Albury Builder*, Compiled by Jan Hunter, 2011

Building the Neighbourhood: Central North Albury 1920-1950, Jan Hunter (Triple D Books Wagga Wagga 2007)

Just a local builder - Maurice Chick looks back. Jan Hunter (Doug Hunter Albury 2008)



Hard plastering on this building done by Claude Pearsall

sand to various building sites for Claude Pearsall.

G (BILL) WASHINGTON, CARRIER

Mr Washington was a formal man. Although written in pencil, his ledger carefully used full names in inverted commas. So we have "Mr J Cochrane" or "Mr John (Jack) Lemcke". But, we also have "Ted" Mate Street. "Ted" is in inverted commas but unusually, just first name and abbreviated form. There is only one other reference

STATELY HOMES IN THE DISTRICT

A presentation by Howard Jones

Woomargama Station is a rural property located off the Hume Freeway between Albury and Holbrook. It was home to Prince Charles, Princess Diana and Prince William for several weeks in 1983. It was loaned to the royal couple by Gordon and Margaret Darling, who had owned it since about 1965 and had modernised the house. Before that, the Fairbairn family owned it. Mrs Darling died in November 2010.

The Darlings once hosted Ronald Reagan when he was Governor of California. *Woomargama* homestead is mostly single-storey, with a squat tower, a bathroom upstairs, a swimming pool and servants' quarters.

Collendina is located off the Riverina Highway near Corowa. The pastoral lease was first taken up by Albury's first resident, Robert Brown, in 1841. Brown built a very modest timber house. In 1873, William Hay, of Boomanoomana, and his sons, Alfred and Henry, bought the pastoral lease, and in 1886 *Collendina* became Henry Hay's property. He married a girl from *Peechelba* Station and they had six children. *Peechelba* is just north of Wangaratta and was the place where bushranger Dan Morgan met his end.

In 1886, Henry Hay ordered a new house and engaged a Melbourne architect, William Pitt. Pitt designed many famous buildings including the Princess Theatre and the Queens Bridge in Melbourne. Pitt was mayor of Collingwood in 1891.

Collendina is a solid two-storey building with verandah, and has 30 rooms. Henry Hay died in 1918. The Carroll family owned *Collendina* for the next 50 years and the property is now owned by the Cranney family.

Bontharambo is located at Boorhaman on the northern edge of Wangaratta. The property was taken up by Reverend Joseph Docker in 1838. The original residence was a slab hut. This was followed by a large slab house. The Rev and Mrs Docker raised 11 children.

In 1857, Docker had architect Thomas Watts design a two-storey mansion in the Italianate style. The house has a graceful colonnade on the ground floor. Docker ordered 400 tons of granite, carted from Beechworth by bullock-wagon, to be used in the foundations.

The architect, Thomas Watts had designed town houses in Richmond for Docker. Thirty years later he designed the 5-storey Robbs Building in Collins Street Melbourne which was demolished

in 1980 to allow the construction of the Rialto by Grollo Brothers.

Bontharambo is still occupied by descendants of the Docker family, into the sixth generation.



***Bontharambo* at Boorhaman, in the Wangaratta district, built for Joseph Docker in 1857-59**

Koendidda, in the Indigo Valley south of Wodonga, is a Georgian-style, two-storey house owned by John Potter. Such houses were typically symmetrical, with the front door and hall in the middle.

Koendidda was designed about 1860 by Humphrey Pooley, who is supposed to have had a vision that he'd find gold under a certain tree at Allans Flat, and he did.

About 330,000 bricks, made locally on the bank of the Indigo Creek, were used in the triple-brick walls, stables, wine cellars, a large barn and other sundry buildings. The cast-iron verandah was added in the 1870s.

All timbers, including ironbark, river red gum, Murray pine, red pine and red cedar, were milled locally. Only the doors and glass were shipped in from England.

Pooley died in 1911, aged 88. His house remained in his family until the 1970s.

Gundowring Homestead, in the Kiewa Valley, south of Wodonga, is also a two storey Georgian house probably built in the 1850s or 1860s. It was built for Charles Henry Barber who arrived to manage *Gundowring* for his father in 1838. He was 18 years of age and lived in a bark hut. Charles Henry was a great nephew of explorer Hamilton Hume, his grandmother having been Hume's sister.

Family historian, Stuart Hamilton Hume, claims the verandah posts from floor to roof are masts of old sailing ships, and are as hard as concrete. Dale Crooke bought the property in 1944. The Crooke family still own *Gundowring* where they manufacture gourmet ice cream.

Fairfield, on Browns Plains near Rutherglen, is a splendid house designed by architects, Gordon & Gordon, of Albury and Wodonga. It was built in 1889 for George Francis Morris. It has 21 rooms with a ballroom on the ground floor and lots of cellar space underground.

Morris died in 1910 and the family sold the house, but Melba Morris Slamen bought it back in 1973. She is Morris's great-granddaughter.

Olive Hills is a large brick homestead with tower and a complex of related farm buildings on a hill opposite *Fairfield*. It was built in 1886 for Hugh Fraser, a Scot who had worked at *Bontharambo* for the Dockers. The architect is not known. An unusual feature is extensive living space underground.

Some people saw Fraser's move as an act of one-upmanship to *Fairfield*, but he went broke in the 1890s depression. In 1898 he sold *Olive Hills* to Hugh McKenzie, a New Zealand contractor.

From 1938, *Olive Hills* was owned by Richard Knight, but is now owned by the Perry family of Valentine's Bakery.

Mandalay, now a Benalla bed and breakfast establishment, is in the classic Queen Anne Federation style, and is arguably the best example of its kind in the North-East. Wodonga can boast the lovely *Cambourne*, but it is older and has an iron verandah, whereas *Mandalay's* verandah uses timber posts.

Mandalay was built about 1912 for Christopher and Ellen Stolz, and originally called *Christella Park*. Features include a multi-gabled roof with terracotta tiles, tall brick chimneys with terracotta pots and dormer windows. It was among the first homes in the North-East to have double-brick cavity walls.

Bishop's Lodge at Ovens Street, Wangaratta was built in 1904 in the Federation style, though unusually with a little roof spire and an elaborate cast iron lace verandah. Other features include a corrugated iron roof, half timbered and roughcast projecting gables and tall chimneys. The house has six bedrooms and seven main rooms including a library.

St Patrick's Catholic Presbytery in Smollett Street Albury, dates from 1904-05 and was designed by Fenton Spencer of Melbourne. While it is mostly red brick, the front wall has granite salvaged from the old presbytery.

Murrnong, in the Rand district, 78km north-west of Albury, was a project of a wealthy grazier, Robert Rand. He planned it for his sister Sarah, but he died in 1894 before it was started.



Members of the cast of the Albury Repertory Company production 'Little Women' posing outside *Forrest Lodge* in October 1962. From left they are Jeryl Watson, Carmel Esler, Barbara Jerram and Olgamary Whelan.

Photo: Border Morning Mail 16.10.1962

The house was built in 1896 without regard to expense. The single-storey brick structure has seven bedrooms, with 14ft 6ins [4.4m] ceilings, and covers 100 squares [939 sqm]. A castellated porch, wide verandah, tall, narrow windows, marble and timber fireplaces and leadlight windows make it a home of distinction.

Forrest Lodge 730 Fellowes Crescent, Albury, was built about 1871 as a two-storey mansion for businessman and church organist William Edmondson. Edmondson was mayor of Albury in 1872.

It was surrounded by open land now covered by Forrest Hill estate, with a long driveway from Thurgoona Street.

In 1928, the house was redesigned for Charles Griffith and Gerald Stedman and the *porte cochère* with Tuscan pillars added. When the Forrest Hill estate was developed, the house was left on a one-acre block and occupants have included the Jabara, West, Seaton and Buckmaster families.

Ken Young designed additions and a guest wing

in 1996 for Curt Leonard, head of Uncle Ben's. It now has 70 squares [650 sqm]. In 1999, it became the first house in Albury sold for over \$1million.

De Kerilleau in east Wodonga dates from 1870 and is the second homestead on the property. It's in the Georgian style but exceptionally large. It is a solid two storey red brick building with cream brick flat window arches. A fine two-storey cast-iron verandah has been restored to its original condition

It was built for William Huon, who lived there until his death in 1908. After that, it was owned by the Gordon family and from 1922, the Watson family. After 88 years, the Watson family sold to a doctor in 2010.

THE FIRE AT TIETYENS, ANGEL & JACKLING

Patricia Strachan has provided more on the New Year's Eve fire 1962.

In those days it was customary for folk to gather at the intersection of Dean & Kiewa Streets, listen to the Post Office clock strike 12 and then sing Auld Lang Syne.

Isobel Williams had ridden her bike down that evening and, following staff practice, had gone down the lane to TA&J's back door, to which we all had a key. She'd left her bike in the back of the premises, locked the door again and joined the crowd.

As people were leaving, Isobel spotted the smoke and ran down the lane to get her bike, but I think a fireman stopped her from opening the door and she had to wait till next morning to get it.

As Noel Jackling said, the fire in the centre of the ground floor was the one which took off. It was the mail and ledger rooms and from there went through to the back of the building, where scrap paper was put into tea chests, before being disposed of. The fire had such a great time with the scrap paper, it didn't get much further.

There was a degree of smoke damage in all our offices. Mine, in those days, was in the back of the adjoining office building and I had a window which, when opened, looked out into the back of the Hotel itself. The Hotel's odd jobs man kept nosing around. He seemed to be everywhere.

Stan Jackling had a strict rule that all documents, and I mean ALL, had to be locked in the strong room in the cellar every day, so the only important documents, not lost, but damaged, were two Certificates of Title which one Solicitor had left on his desk. All outgoing correspondence reached the mail desk in duplicate and the duplicates of the last day's correspondence had been burnt. A mail sheet listing the day's correspondence had survived, so the first thing Stan did was to notify the addressee of each item, to check

whether it had arrived at its destination.

The stairs to the cellar were in the mail room. Somebody had attacked the brickwork around the lock of the cellar door, but they had negligible chance of breaking in. We took it it was intended as a diversion to the real reason for starting the fire.

There was an Inquest which achieved nothing. Staff had their suspicions, but nothing could be proved.

LATEST A&DHS PAPERS

The latest Papers published by the Society and shortly to be in the History Room at the Library-Museum are:

No 13. *Albury Builders and Allied Trades Contractors c.1900-c.1960*, Compiled by Jan Hunter, 2011

No 14. *Lewis Jones: London pickpocket to Albury Town Treasurer, Mayor and JP*, Howard C Jones 2011

No 15. *Frederick William Lemcke Albury Builder*, Compiled by Jan Hunter, 2011

No 16. *Australian Red Cross: North Albury Sub Branch*, Compiled by Jan Hunter 2011.

FIFTY YEARS AGO OPENING THE THIRD UNION BRIDGE

Research by Eric Cossor

"Police kept close guard on the approaches and bridge itself, and dozens of bridge workmen were ready, they said, 'to toss anyone into the Murray' who tried to interfere with the ceremony." *Border Morning Mail*, 8/4/1961, reporting on the opening of the Union Bridge on Friday 7 April 1961.

The bridge, the third to be built on this site, was opened by the Rt Hon R J Heffron, Premier of NSW before a 1000 strong crowd including hundreds of school children. [Who was there and remembers the day?]

At the beginning of the ceremony, the Mayor of Albury, Alderman C E Bunton, invited the public to take unoccupied official seats. Traffic continued to cross the old bridge, but barriers prevented the possibility of a rush of "first over" traffic.

A car carrying the Premier, the Mayor and the Member for Albury, Mr D Padman MLA, was the first vehicle to cross. It was followed by a "smoke-spouting bomb" owned by the bridge foreman, Mr G Barty. Barriers were quickly removed and general traffic flowed across the £240,000 new bridge. [\$3.5 million in 2011 dollars]

"Albury - a History in Pictures"
DVD available from Foto Supplies
Dean Street for \$19.95