



ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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DECEMBER 2016

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REPORT ON NOVEMBER MEETING (9.11.2016)

Our president Doug Hunter welcomed members and guests and reminded everyone about the Society Xmas Dinner which will be held at the Commercial Club on 16 December.

Then to mark the centenary of the conscription referendum in October 1916, Bruce Pennay spoke to the causes, conduct and consequences of that and the subsequent referendum in 1917, paying particular attention to the Albury district. Bruce's in-depth dissection of the behaviour of the voting public in different areas gave us great insight into the extreme and divisive emotions of the time.

Caryn Giblin, the co-ordinator of the Learning & Outreach Team at the Albury Library Museum spoke on her background and then about her team who provide learning and education programs across a wide range of interesting topics. She used the What's On booklet to demonstrate the varied exhibitions and extensive activities that are interlinked to engage the community. Some super sleuthing by Ray Gear revealed that 50 years ago in Albury there was a near riot at the Civic Theatre when Johnny Young appeared. The NSW Department of Railways were advertising for apprentices at \$18.25 per week and two Albury Girl Guides received the Queen's Guide award, one being Narda Reid who is one of our current members! The audience then greatly enjoyed participating in a visual quiz borrowed from Judy Garvie from Albury Probus Club. The quiz involved the identification of photographs shot around the town's landmarks from unusual angles. Finally Greg Ryan gave some tips on how to view and interact with the Society Facebook page.

NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY

14 DECEMBER, 2016

7.30pm at Commercial
Club Albury

**'Show and tell: Objects
and happenings which
shaped Albury'**
**Speakers include: Howard
Jones & Doug Hunter**

No Show & Tell for Members
due to time constraints.

**ALBURY LIBRARY-
MUSEUM
RIVERINA DISTRICT
WOMEN'S BOWLING
ASSOCIATION:
CELEBRATING 60 YEARS**

**27 AUG 2016 -
15 JAN 2017**

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ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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<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:
Howard Jones, Helen Livsey,
June Shanahan, Jan Hunter.
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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 5pm at the Albury
LibraryMuseum.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

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

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

GREAT WAR CONSCRIPTION REFERENDA: THE POLITICS OF WAR AND THE ALBURY DISTRICT DR BRUCE PENNAY

In December 1917, the Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, advocating a YES vote in favour of conscription, was warmly received in Albury. According to the Albury Banner, 'Such scenes of enthusiasm were never before witnessed in the town There was not a dissentient voice The cheers from the meeting could be heard two miles away.' Yet, within the quiet of voting booths ten days later, the majority of the eligible voters of Albury, of Wodonga, of both their wider electorates, of New South Wales, of Victoria, of Australia rejected his move to introduce conscription. Why? We can never know why people vote as they do. But like present-day electoral analysts, such as the ABC's Anthony Green, we can try to unravel something of the circumstances which may have led some parts of this local district to vote NO and others to vote YES. Voting patterns, economic and social character of places, campaigning strengths and weaknesses all seem relevant. They may help us to understand how people made sense of the national and local situation. But they are unlikely to reveal much about how voters weighed family or personal circumstances, or how far they thought they were facing a moral rather than a political question. Plebiscites are supposed to be the most democratic of decision-making processes. But can the counting of heads determine the right or wrong of questions like conscription, same-sex marriage, or euthanasia?

There were two so-called referenda, which were actually plebiscites for they were for changes to the Military Service Act, not the constitution. The first was in October 1916, 100 years ago. The second in December 1917. Both the plebiscites were, and probably still are, divisive. Proverbial mothers warn against speaking about religion, sex or politics, as they may offend the personal values others hold close. Yet the politics of war, however contentious, provide additional ways of unravelling the impact of the Great War on the local district.

Three contemporary voting complications.

The referenda votes fit within the frame of a district political history, in which there were three major complications in the first decades of the twentieth century: women had won the vote and special attention was given to them by political campaigners; the Australian Labor Party had won office at the national and state levels as a country party; another country 'party' was just beginning to appear.

Such complications shaped the state election in 1913, which Labor won narrowly. In Albury, John Joseph Cusack beat Gordon McLaurin. McLaurin was the sitting member since 1901, a Holbrook grazier and the son of James, an early parliamentary representative. Cusack was a former Yass district blacksmith, the former member for Queanbeyan, a Catholic and a 'Labor upstart', but in 1913 he became Albury's first ALP member.

Harry Paech from Walla Walla, had stood as a Farmers and Settlers representative, when McLaurin, wanting to maintain his 'independence', did not agree to bind his vote as required. Paech split the non-labour vote. A second poll was required because there was no preference voting. Cusack won the second ballot, with many more women voting in that second ballot, probably for Labor. A disgruntled McLaurin complained he was beaten by voters being "herded" into the north of the electorate. He was referring to the new subdivisions that were breaking up the big estates at Table Top, Burrumbuttock, Walbundrie, Round Hill, Gerogery West, Brae Springs and Walla Walla. All prompted by the growth in mixed farming. Ten days after war started, McLaurin wrote to the military authorities warning them to watch out for "disloyalty" in the Walla part of the electorate.

Enlarging Albury.

The war coincided with a number of fundamental changes that populated the district and enlarged the pull of Albury as a service centre. In 1902 Albury was still a walking city, offering the urban farmlands north of North Street and Lavington as the site of the new federal capital.

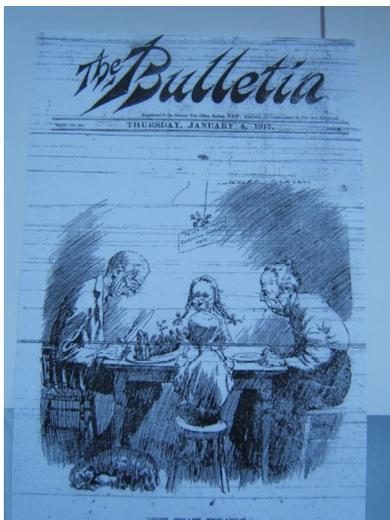


GREAT WAR CONSCRIPTION REFERENDA: THE POLITICS OF WAR AND THE ALBURY DISTRICT

Council had negotiated loans for a new town hall and an electricity network, which, like its sewerage system, was within close immediate bounds. Through and soon after the war years, Albury began to break its North Street boundary with the telephone, the bus and car. Newly constructed spur lines ran off the railway to the north fostering new optimistic small villages every 15 miles or so. Mixed farming peopled the countryside, because rural industries were labour intensive. The car helped service this growing district, as recruiting officers found. The turn-of-the-century expansion of wheat farming was good for Albury and the war years were kind to the economy. Albury emerged from the war with an expanded railway station yard, a growing industrial complex to the north of the yard. And shortly after the war, a new hospital and a high school. During the war agreement was reached to build Hume Dam. Each of the three Rs of regional development - road, rail, and river had been enhanced. By the end of the war Albury looked and felt like a sizeable country town servicing a well-populated district. Albury's economic well-being was dependent on a countryside that was making the transition from a pastoral to a mixed farming economy. Plainly the rural workforce would be seriously depleted if conscription went ahead. Parker Moloney, the first ALP member for Indi, and Hume Shire farming community leaders, like George and Ben Bell, argued that the man in the paddock, the man on the wagon, the village blacksmith were all contributing to the war effort by producing the food Europe so urgently needed.

District Germans.

North of Albury, long-established Germans had an extensive network of Lutheran churches and attached schools, where they retained the German religion and language. They were similarly well represented in Yackandandah, Wodonga and Tallangatta. Through 1915, there were calls to shut the German schools. At least three young-ish Germans appeared before courts, when they got into name-calling arguments and pub fights. Even model citizens like the Schlinks of Wodonga were made uncomfortable. Herbert was the senior medical officer at Liverpool Camp. He had to resign his commission when questions were asked in parliament about why a person with a German name was in charge of a military hospital.



National Library Norman Lindsay, Bulletin
4 January 1917.

Propaganda.

Propagandists read their audiences shrewdly. They showed that this enemy did not heed civilians or respect women. The Huns were atrocious. Fierce Germans and no one else were to blame for the war. This was a just war. The Germans intended to engulf Australia, endangering frail women.

Special appeal was made for the women's vote. After all, every soldier had a mother. And every mother with children faced a life of poverty as a widow with the loss or incapacity of the family breadwinner.

After the 1916 referendum, Norman Lindsay's everyday Germans wanted God to punish England. Local loyalists made official complaints about the loyalty of people they did not like. Still, through a time when harassment was condoned by propagandists, embattled communities prized acts of kindness. Farmers in Jindera presented Constable Herbert Palmer with a pen stand for his consideration in riding amongst them and accepting a wave from a paddock as the required regular report to the police station.

Voting in the referenda.

Germans, it was said, were too pro-German to be patriotic. At the 1916 referendum, electoral officials could set aside the votes of those of enemy origin. 170 votes were set aside in the Hume electorate which included Albury and 90 in Indi, across the river.

At the 1917 referendum voting eligibility grew tighter. Those born in a belligerent country, irrespective of citizenship, and their children, and those who had no proof of place of birth were disqualified. Postmen were given a penny halfpenny for every name they supplied of a person who could be ineligible to vote. In the Hume electorate, including Albury, they earned £11. 19. 8 for nearly 2,000 possible disqualifications. In Culcairn, for instance, the total eligible vote was 761 in 1916 and 177 in 1917.

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Most of the people in Albury, its near north and the near south voted NO in 1916 and again in 1917. However, some polling places consistently voted YES. Beechworth voters were statistically older. Those not directly affected by conscription tended to vote in favour of it. Germanton Shire Council had decided in 1915 to change its name, because as one citizen said, the people wanted to 'hand down to posterity the detestation with which inhabitants view the fiendishness of the German nation'. Any name would do, as long as it was patriotic. The newly named Holbrook wanted to distinguish itself from its German-settled neighbours. Unlike them it was still largely pastoral. Furthermore, there were, some felt, deep religious differences between the shires. Holbrook's Presbyterians stood to sing, whereas nearby Lutherans sat to sing, but stood for the gospel.

Consequences of two failed referenda.

Anti-German activities intensified after the two failed referenda and became even more forceful, that is lurid, extravagant and insistent. The Germans were more and more atrocious.

Anti-Catholic feeling had deepened with the responses of Archbishop Mannix to the brutal suppression of the Irish Rebellion at Easter in 1916. Expressions of those feelings, too, intensified after the first referendum. Catholics were not doing their share. At least two families in the district with ten children had no one at the front. Father Flynn in Wodonga was too busy raising funds for his buildings at St Augustine's to raise patriotic funds. Albury had an active Loyal Orange Lodge, which had expressed its dismay when the Governor a few years earlier had visited Newtown Orphanage. The seeds of sectarianism fell on receptive soil.

Within the Albury district, loyal police and loyal citizens grew even more vigorous in denouncing 'the enemy within'. At the end of 1917 the bank manager at Walla Walla described Walla as 'an Australian Berlin, a hotbed of disloyalty'. Harry Paech led a protest with the same vigour he had used against the injustice of being disenfranchised – of being excluded from the community. Four members of the Culcairn council were arrested following a secret service investigation.

No charges were laid against any of the four – Harry Paech, John Wenke, Ernest Wenke and Edward Heppner – and, consequently, there was no opportunity to refute them.

Two questions, two conclusions.

Explaining the NO vote

My argument that Albury followed its economic head at the conscription polls has to be buttressed because Wagga Wagga voted YES, yet drew its wealth from a similar countryside. I point to social and personal circumstances. First, the Germans in Wagga's surrounds were further to the north, around Temora, in a different electorate. Census returns by county show more Lutherans north of Albury than in any other county in the state. Second, Albury had proportionately a larger proportion of Catholics, 1 in 3, compared with just over 1 in 5 nationally and 1 in 4 in Wagga. Both Catholics and Germans might be expected to vote NO. Third, most local booths seem to have proportionately consistent returns. Perhaps, after all, within the privacy of the polling place, people persisted in viewing their personal and family needs ahead of district, national or empire needs.

Impact of the Great War.

Two eminent historians, Bill Gammage and Joan Beaumont argue that the period of the Great War was for a generation the 'Broken Years' and Australia was a 'Broken Country'. Albury was not a broken town or district, indeed the war years were economically at least kind to Albury. But it emerged as a fragmented community. Admittedly, nobody was reported as having died from being insulted, offended or vilified – or disenfranchised (that is cast out of the community), but many were humiliated into being 'other'.

The war proved divisive. The referenda unleashed or renewed xenophobic and sectarian divides that continued through to and beyond the next World war.

The Society would like to apologise for the recent 'outage' to our website. The site was infected with malware and as a result we are in the process of moving to a new host, then rebuilding the site. We have moved to Coxtech, a local host. Damian Cox at Coxtech has made us a generous offer to host the site and to be our technical support. By the time you read this, the site should be back online, but it will take a while for it to be fully restored. So please be patient and we hope that improved security measures in place will prevent such an outage happening in the future.



JAMES WALLACE SPROULE – ALBURY’S ART DECO ARCHITECT BY JAN HUNTER



615 Lindsay Avenue, Albury

James Wallace (Wal) Sproule was the eldest child of John and Ellen Sproule, farmers near Kiama but his father died at a young age. His mother married Alvis Ried, bricklayer in 1904 and the family moved to Rutherglen. Wal was taught the bricklaying trade by his stepfather. When the family moved to Elsternwick in 1910 Wal joined various bands, playing the trombone. He also had a fine singing voice. Wal married Florence Ann Rowe in 1912 and in 1915 they were living in Sydney. Wal enlisted in WWI and the Sproules called their first son Berrima (known as Berry) named after the troop ship Wal had sailed on to German New

Guinea. In 1917 Wal was granted a soldier settler's block at Oban's Estate Coolah NSW. That year a second son was born named James Oban Sproule (known as Otto). A daughter and 2 more sons followed. While at Coolah, Wal studied by distance education to become an architect, supporting the family by building and bricklaying. Moving to Queanbeyan in 1923 Wal worked as a draughtsman on the plans for what is now called the Old Parliament House. In 1924 he qualified as NSW architect No 640. He designed many important buildings in Queanbeyan including the town hall, the school of arts, the Masonic temple, the Methodist parsonage and the Christ Church Parish Hall. Decades later he was called 'a most imaginative product of his profession' by a Queanbeyan historian.

After a short stay in Bathurst the Sproules moved to 682 Sackville St Albury in 1937. Wal marched in both Wodonga and Albury Anzac Day parades, won prizes at the Albury Show for pen and ink studies and was active in the Soldiers' Memorial Fund. At 50, he enlisted in the CMF in 1940 and was transferred to Bonegilla.

Not long after the family came to Albury the whole family attended a mission at the Church of Christ and after that they became active church members. Wal participated in running a Sunday School at the Returned Soldiers Housing Settlement at Mungabareena. He was part of the Albury City Choral Society's first concert in 1947 and was also an honorary architect for the Albury District Hospital.

James Wallace Sproule was to the forefront in the art deco designs of Albury houses and buildings – these are a selection.

*636 Grafton St. This house was designed two years after the Sproules arrived in 1939 for A Newnham of 2CO radio fame.

*438 Bellevue Street. (1947) Designed for Mrs Ada Marks, the builder BM Griffith & Co with Percy Sampson as Clerk of Works. This house has been sensitively renovated.

*615 Lindsay Avenue. (1948) This prime example of Moderne design by James Wallace Sproule, is well known in Australian Art Deco circles – with pictures of it in magazines and books. The owner was Mrs A D Roberts and Wal's son, Otto was the builder.

*755 Jones St. (1951) Called 'Thatawi'. Wal worked from home and his sons set up as Sproule Bros builders.

*Baker Motors. Sproule's commercial premises showed Art Deco motifs – in this case the Aztec winged serpent motif which was so popular, the rounded balcony and circle on the door..

*The White House in David Street is a more simple art deco design – with portholes and a straight parapet line.

*493 Beyer Street.(1953) Designed for R W Faul.

Special thanks to the Commercial Club Albury Ltd for supplying a meeting room for many years and also for their continued support. Please click on the logo to access their website.



*Boomerang Hotel/Motel.(1959) Designed for Pearsall & Frauenfelder.

The first Motel in Albury. Wal designed the motel units.

*Albury Grammar School grandstand and recreation room.(1962) This building was a memorial to Alan Hamilton Smith.

The Sproule sons helped develop the northern end of Jones Street, with designs by their father.

729,735 (Geo Benson), 749,753 Jones St.

Other buildings include:

The Pivot Arcade. (1962)

Band Rooms, Reserve St.

Myrtleford Hospital.

Walla Walla Bowling Club.

Tooma Homestead (Patons).

641 Elm St, Albury.

758 Fellowes Crescent, Albury.

Church of Christ, Wodonga.

James Wallace (Wal) Sproule’s life included many moves and many aspects. He worked until he was 74 and died in Albury in 1970. He leaves a small but very significant architectural legacy of art deco designs in the Albury district.



Walla Walla Bowling Club

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE JOURNALS

‘Argyle Bulletin’ – Goulburn – Aug 2016.

The Dignams of Goulburn. Includes background on William Evans Dignam who removed to Albury in 1870 and died here on the 16 November 1877 aged 42.

‘Descent’ – Society Australian Genealogists – Sept 16. – (Online)

John Lea, Monumental Mason – A Charity Shop Find.

‘Link ‘N’ Chains’ – Liverpool – Oct 2016

School Days in the 1940s.

‘Placenames Australia’ – Dec 2016

Toponymy 101 : The power of placenames.

‘RAHS History Magazine’ - Sept 16.

Memories of Chinese Market Gardeners in Ryde.

Post-War Censor Out of Step with Public Opinion when Rusty Bugles Heralded a New Era of Australian Theatre History.

‘WWDHS’- Wagga Wagga – ‘Dec 2016 - Jan 2017’ – (Online)

The Harding Family.

**OUR XMAS GATHERING IS BEING HELD ON
FRIDAY 16 DECEMBER AT THE COMMERCIAL CLUB 6.30PM
\$40 PER HEAD.**

COULD ALL ATTENDING PLEASE BRING A GIFT TO THE VALUE OF \$5



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