

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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506

REPORT ON THE SEPTEMBER ACTIVITIES

NSW History Week has made this month a busy one for the Society. On Sunday 5 September, five of our ladies combined in a presentation highlighting the contribution of five women to the Albury community. Eighty members of the public attended the event at the LibraryMuseum. We were overwhelmed by the attendance; it was standing room only as Bridget Guthrie welcomed everyone and introduced the speakers. The program ran to time and tea and cakes were enjoyed afterwards. Many of those in attendance had some knowledge of one or more of the subject women, so were able to add snippets to the wealth of information already gathered. Visitors to the LibraryMuseum during History Week were treated to a presentation of street photos running on the big screen in the foyer. This presentation was put together by Library staff from photos Jan Hunter borrowed from Society members. A showcase of fashions from the era complemented the display. Our thanks to Library staff for their enthusiastic contribution.

On Wednesday evening 8 September, our presenters gave a repeat performance at our regular monthly meeting. Thirty-two members and guests attended. In his opening remarks, president, Chris McQuellin thanked staff members, Carole Whitbourn and Bridget Guthrie for having the LibraryMuseum open for us.

Chris also thanked Harry Leggatt for providing notes for a Heritage Walk to be distributed from the Tourist Office at the Stationmaster's Residence. Chris reported that contact has been made with a member of the Military Historical Society in South Africa in an attempt to find the grave of Gunner Bernard Gow-

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY

13 October 2010

7.30pm at

LibraryMuseum

Albury

Speaker Noel Jackling:

“Interpreting a bundle of old concert programs. Classical music in Albury after World War II as seen through a collection of ABC and Albury Choral Society programs.”

**Please bring plate
for supper**

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

**Where were the stock routes
in Albury; what was their
purpose and when were they
last used?**

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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

ing of Albury who was killed in action during the Boer War.

**IVY (BOBBIE) DERKENNE
FIRST WOMAN ON ALBURY COUNCIL**

Presented by Pauline Harbick

Ivy Constance (Bobbie) Derkenne was the first woman elected to the Albury City Council. She stood for office 6 times over 12 years before being elected in 1971. Bobbie was born Ivy McFarlane in 1919 in Cardiff, Wales. She migrated to Sydney with her family in 1923. Her father was an ironmonger and worked on the construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge. She attended Sydney Girls' High and on leaving became a secretary in Sydney. Here she met her husband Jim Derkenne who was in the Australian Army and they were married in 1943 and moved to Melbourne where their children Dianne and Dennis were born in 1945 and 1946. Jim was posted to England in 1952 and spent 4 years in London where he was a small fire arms expert and travelled around lecturing, returning to Albury in 1956/7. During this time they travelled the continent and were regular visitors to historical places of interest. During the London posting Jim was selected to be a part of the Coronation ceremony for QE11- he was a guard along the parade route. No one is quite sure why Ivy was known as "Bobbie" but it was believed to have come from friends that she made in the 1940s.

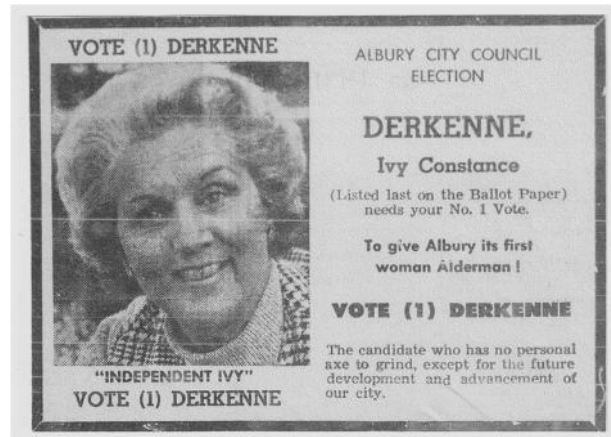
EARLY INTEREST IN POLITICS

Bobbie had an early interest in local government and undertook studies in that area which were never completed owing to WWIL. Her early jobs in Albury included that of private secretary to D G Padman MLA and later David Fairbairn MHR who was Minister for Air at the time. She was exceptionally clever with words and was a brilliant speech writer for both of these parliamentarians. She was President of the Albury Women's Liberal Club for 7 years, 1957-63.

Bobbie was the private secretary to the heads of the Albury Grammar School from 1959-1979 and over the years worked for four principals. Jim also worked at the school in a variety of capacities including bursar, clerk of works, OC cadets and coach of the hockey team.

FIRST TILT AT COUNCIL

In 1959 Bobbie stood for election to the Albury City Council for the first time. Her slogan was "Derkenne for the Women of Albury". She promised to safeguard the interests of all women and their families and said she would not expect preferential treatment because she was a woman. She thought women had earned a right to representation because of the amount of community work they had done for civic projects - school auxiliaries,



Campaign advertisement 1971, the year Bobbie Derkenne was the first woman to be elected to Albury City Council.

Red Cross, CWA and Business & Professional Women (BPW) to name some. She also said that ratepayers wished for a woman's tact, advice and understanding in council deliberations. The major issue for her was development of industry to maximise employment prospects and job security for those with families. She was also especially interested in promoting tourism to the area.

On election day there were 24 candidates for 11 positions and Bobbie polled only 114 primary votes finishing 16th. Dorothy Prosser B.Ec., Courthouse clerk, also stood unsuccessfully at this election.

SECOND ATTEMPT

By 1962, Bobbie was telling electors that: "My voice will speak the opinions of women but also on behalf of the male members of community." She had proved her civic pride by working for betterment of community with the Red Cross and CWA. She was frustrated that women were not working to their full potential in civic affairs and she felt that she was not receiving the support of other women.

Supporting articles appeared in the *Border Morning Mail (BMM)* citing Pat White, hairdresser; Miss Mangan, service station operator and Matron Turnbull of Albury Base Hospital as examples of women who had successful jobs outside the home. Matron Turnbull noted, "that prejudice against women in public office is not strictly a male one. It is a peculiarity of this country that the women also refuse to support their own sex in such endeavours."

Derkenne was joined in the 1962 election by another woman candidate, Mrs D Redmond, but managed only 88 primary votes. Bobbie supported building the Civic Centre Concert Hall and was in favour of fluoridation of the water supply.

ANOTHER ATTEMPT

In 1968 Bobbie had continued her community involvement and had a long list of organisations that she was involved with. She was a member of the

Australian Local Government Women's Association, Albury and District Promotional Council, a Chamber of Commerce sub committee and was an observer member of the Regional Promotion Council. She was president of the Good Neighbour Council (helping immigrants to assimilate), Albury Spastic Council, Albury Art Society, Albury Industries Committee and the Concert Hall Committee. She was also a Justice of the Peace.

The editorial in the *BMM* urged women's organisations to get behind Bobbie as she "might let light and air" into the council. Her issues for this election were to finance a permanent and satisfactory water system, industrial development, tourism, migrant aid, especially education and language classes, a community aid centre, civil works and keeping the community informed of council undertakings.

In the 1970 by-election Bobbie came close to being elected when 9 candidates stood for 1 vacancy. At this time she was actively pursuing reform to the NSW jury system where men were automatically included on the jury roll, but women had to apply to be considered. She urged women's organisations to support the cause as "a jury made up of men only is not a true cross representation of a community."

ELECTED

Finally, in 1971 Bobbie was elected to council. She said that she had "no personal axe to grind" and was truly independent, even refusing endorsement from the Albury Civic Reform Group so that her independence would not be compromised. Her civic interests were again future development and advancement of our city and she specifically wanted to establish a tourist bureau. She did not emphasise the representation of women so much, but did note that the council needed diversity. "I feel a woman should not expect to be elected for any particular reason, other than that she would represent all of the people, all of the time."

This time Bobbie polled 3rd on primary votes out of 21 candidates. The *BMM* called her a "Grandmother with Go". She named those who inspired her as Mesdames Doll Peach and Gertrude Colquhoun.

Bobbie believed in equal rights for women but did not identify with the loud and bold women's liberationist movement. In 1972 she said that her election was a sign of the times and that the old adage of "a woman's place is in the home" was simply not true anymore. She felt that women had something to offer the community but that they needed to come forward and stand up for their rights.

Some of her priorities while on council were to see a university established in Albury so that stu-

dents did not have to travel to Sydney or Melbourne for studies; development of the tourism industry and development of industry in general to provide jobs for locals.

SNAKES

Councillor Patricia Gould recalls the time that she and Councillor Robyn Cain were having trouble persuading the council to fund new fencing at the swimming pool to prevent snakes getting in. Over a week Mr Barber, pool manager, caught and kept 5 snakes. They were taken, in various stages of decomposition, to a council meeting on a Monday night. While the meeting was in progress, the dead snakes were kept in a bag in the ladies' toilet where they produced quite a nasty smell. At the appropriate time in the meeting the bag was produced and the snakes were emptied out on to the table. Bobbie was horrified, screamed and ran out of the room and into the ladies' toilet where the smell still lingered. She ran out again and was not happy saying how "disgusting" the whole affair was.

A PRIVATE PERSON

According to her family, Bobbie was a stickler for manners, speech and appearance. She was always immaculately groomed and dressed even at home and was often pictured wearing gloves. She enjoyed decorating the family home and it was a very comfortable and attractive place to live no matter where they were. She was a great hostess, the life of the party and a good singer and dancer, but she was also a very private person. Her friends would ring and ask to call, never just "drop in".

In an interesting article in 1976 Bobbie said that she was a "lady" and did not want to be "treated as one of the boys". "If I went into the council chamber and my chair wasn't pulled out, I think I'd quit." This is perhaps reflective of her upbringing and insistence on good manners. Continuing her trailblazing efforts Bobbie was elected to the Murray River County Council in 1976, the first woman.

Bobbie and Jim retired to Southport, Queensland in 1979. Bobbie died in May 2002 after a 5 year battle with dementia and is buried in Tumut (where her daughter lives).

WHO'S WHO

A brief biography of Bobbie appears in the 1982 edition of *Who's Who of Australian Women* which was compiled to celebrate the large number of active and articulate women in this country and to encourage other women to involve themselves in community life. This is a fitting tribute to her hard work over many years and a reminder to us of the significance of her

achievements.

During research we found an interesting newspaper advertisement from the *BMM* at Christmas 1973 thanking councillors for co-operation, understanding and encouragement. We are not sure why Bobbie called herself "The lady in blue". If anyone knows, perhaps they could help us out.

**RAIE LANGLEY
AN ALBURY WOMAN OF NOTE.**

Presented by Carole Whitbourn

In May 1927, Miss Raie Langley opened a "Millinery Parlor" at what is now 611 Dean Street Albury, opposite Burdines. Her advertisements advised that she was a "Millinery Artist of The Block, Collins Street, Melbourne." Inspection of "The Tasteful and High-Class Range of Modes on Exhibit is Solicited." Other advertisements said her millinery followed "styles popular in the cities." However, within three months of opening Miss Langley was having a sale.

After her husband's death in Melbourne, Raynah Pauline Murphy, was urged by her doctor to come to Albury, with her young son, for "peace and quiet". MISS Langley was a bit of a sensation here. The fact that she used her maiden name, had very bright red fingernails and wore wonderful hats made her an exotic figure. Her son, Peter Murphy, boarded at the Albury Grammar School. Raie was one of the first tenants in the T&G flats but later moved to "Gaelee" flats, opposite the Botanic Gardens. She lived there for many years.

Albury women did not take to Raie Langley's high class modes and she was often financially on the edge in her early years of business in Albury.

HAIRDRESSING

Gradually the millinery took a back seat and Raie Langley concentrated on her hairdressing salon. Her advertisements were couched in the language of the times. She "[specialized] in every branch of a Ladies Toilet such as shingling and marcelle waving" and she told Albury ladies that "A modish coiffure is essential to your personal appearance."

Raie Langley's doctor may have felt Albury was peaceful and quiet but Miss Langley stirred it up. She was assistant producer for "Treasure Island" which included 32 children and ran for 3 nights. She was the producer of the "Juvenile Jubilee Revue." In the late thirties Raie presented "A Night in Spain" which had a live donkey drawing a cart across the stage. After the first night, the donkey was replaced by two men in a donkey-suit! The man who was the front legs of the donkey said it was the only time he'd played a leading role in anything!

Raie Langley learned ballet from the time she

was three. One of the revue programmes told Albury audiences that as a schoolgirl [aged 12] Raie had produced a show in the St Kilda Town Hall with a number of young people. At the outbreak of 1914-18 war Miss Langley managed and produced a company called "The Merry Eight" which became very well known in Melbourne.

FUND RAISING

In the late thirties Raie entered an Albury competition as Queen of Essential Services. One of the fund raising schemes involved a market in AMP Lane. The goods for sale included clothing, rabbits and 200 dozen cream puffs! Raie was



**Fund raising button sold as part of Raie Langley's activities as Queen of Essential Services.
Albury City Collection**

pipped at the post right at the last minute so came second in the fund raising.

Raie Langley never stopped. When the Albury area was flooded by troops during WWII, she began a group called The Victory Vanities - about twenty young women who, in the next years, entertained thousands of troops and the public with singing and dancing. All the funds raised were handed on to various war comforts funds including money for Prisoners of War and the Red Cross.

VICTORY VANITIES

The Victory Vanity items were many and varied. As well as the revues, the Victory Vanities ran a dance every Saturday night, with the young women selling drinks and taking turns to be cloak room attendants. The Victory Vanities demobilized in 1945. As an extra activity during the war, Raie Langley gave voluntary chiropody services every Sunday afternoon at No 106 General Hospital, Bandiana.

As mentioned, Raie Langley's fund raising efforts were directed to the many needs of the war effort. However, over her public career, other lo-

cal organisations had benefitted, including the Albury Base Hospital, the CWA rooms and she is credited with being one of the first fund raisers for the new Mercy Hospital. It is estimated that Raie Langley raised around fifteen thousand pounds for charitable causes, over a period of forty years.

In 1943 an Albury girl in Sydney caused a stir when she said, "In Albury we walk along the main street in swimming costumes only and nobody takes any notice... Albury aldermen have modern ideas." The *Border Morning Mail* canvassed various opinions and some well known people were very incensed! However, Raie Langley said, "I have never seen our girls walking down the street in their bathing gowns. I think Albury girls as a general rule are marvelously well conducted and discreet in their dress..."

DEBUTANTES

Raie Langley was known as a perfectionist; she was a hard taskmaster but everything she directed was very professional. That direction included the training and presentation of hundreds of debutantes over the years. The very first debs trained by Raie Langley were presented to the Governor General, Sir Isaac Isaacs. Sitting next to Sir Isaac at supper Raie discovered that he had known her father.

In 1952 Raie Langley was crowned Queen of Albury in an impressive ceremony at the outdoor ballroom of the Palais Royal. Raie directed an Olde Worlde pageant and had trained the attendant Princesses. The very elaborate pageant involved a Town Crier and the Archbishop of Canterbury, better known as the Mayor of Albury, Cleaver Bunton. While it may have been a spectacular affair, the crowd of 700 sat in the pelting rain!

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In 1962(?) Mrs Raie Murphy was chairman of the Albury Council Candidates Campaign Committee. She arranged a meeting for local women to give their views on important issues and to hear a woman senator and the woman candidates. It is interesting to note that in these articles she is called Mrs Murphy, although it is mentioned that she is Miss Raie Langley, an Albury hairdresser. Thirty women and 12 men attended this gathering. One of the men was Deputy Mayor, Ralph

Marks who said Raie Murphy had nominated him for council ten years before. He paid tribute to her personal encouragement and interest in civic affairs.

HONOURED BY MASTER HAIRDRESSERS

Over forty years, even with her theatrical activity, Raie Langley continued to run her hairdressing salon. In 1967 the Master Hairdressers' Association of Australia honoured Miss Langley's contribution to the hairdressing profession.

Miss Langley eventually retired. She moved to Melbourne to be closer to her son and spent her last years in a nursing home there. She died in 1979 aged 89.

Raie Langley – Milliner, Hairdresser, Chiropodist, Producer, Director, Fund Raiser Extraordinaire was indeed an Albury Woman of Note.

ELLA ALLAN

TEACHER & COMMUNITY WORKER

Presented by Ann Brennan

This was a woman who made the most of all opportunities to move ahead with her life; to have a positive influence on everyone around her and to help Albury grow into a well-rounded community. Ella Elizabeth Allan was born on 20



Teachers at Albury High School 1937. Miss Ella Henry is third from left front row. Her future husband Arthur Allan is seated next to her.

July 1911 at Nowra, the first child of James and Isabella Henry. She attended the local one-teacher school with other five to fifteen year olds.

Neighbours thought it was strange that James Henry would pay someone to help milk his cows so that

his eldest child could stay on at school. Following sixth grade, Ella went to Nowra Superior Public School. This meant a four mile, all-weather, sulky ride.

'GOING ON'

After gaining her Intermediate Certificate in Grade 9, Ella and three other students returned to school announcing that they were 'going on.' They all completed their Leaving Certificate working in a corridor with a blackboard and easel. Ella Matriculated, doing a five-year Latin course in just two years. In those days a pass in Latin was required for University entry.

UNIVERSITY

In those days, women were barely tolerated at Australian universities. The architecture of the Sydney University might be awe-inspiring with its sandstone walls and vaulted ceiling structure, but some new students might see it as cold, draughty and inhospitable. Ella, coming from a warm, country farming family felt a bit lonely. None of her family had ever been to university. Years later Ella laughed at how she had walked everywhere to save tram fares but admitted that she 'had probably used up more money wearing out my shoes.'

When Ella graduated during the depression of the 1930's there were no teaching appointments so she took a position as a governess on a property between Moree and the Queensland border. This was a different type of aloneness for Ella.

ALBURY

Her first actual teaching appointment was to teach primary school, although this was not what she was trained for. However, in 1935 she was sent to the Albury High School. In those days female teachers wore hats and gloves to and from school.

Ella kept her work book from this period and she remembered the geography marks of many of her students. In the back of that book are complete catering details of the Fifth Year Farewell and other functions.

Ella seemed to have fitted into Albury and its social life. As a young, single woman, she became involved in the activities at the Methodist Church, being a leader in the Rays, (a Methodist Girls Club), for five years and other social activities as indicated by photos of trips to the snow. One of the young women in a group photo was to become Ella's sister-in-law. This might well have been the first time Ella had seen snow

MARRIAGE & TEACHING DISRUPTIONS

Another teacher at the Albury High School was Arthur Allan and he and Ella were married in 1940. Under the Married Teachers' Act, Ella was promptly dismissed. Arthur was transferred to Lithgow to be Deputy Headmaster, during the war years. Ella took on VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) training and she worked at the local hospital. Her organising ability saw her given increasing responsibility. Arthur was not really at ease with this medical work and when she returned from the hospital he had a clean set of clothes ready and she had to wash herself, on the verandah, before entering the house.

With a shortage of male teachers during the War, Ella was teaching again but was forced to 'retire' again on VE (Victory in Europe),

Day. It is difficult to understand how VE Day could be seen by the Australian Bureaucracy as the end of the War in Australia when the War was still raging to our north. Arthur was transferred to Wollongong, Parkes, Dubbo. He and Ella made friends along the way. They returned to Albury in 1950 and Arthur later became Principal of Albury High School. In 1956 Ella was coaxed back into teaching for a six-month stint, which lasted until 1961 when she and Arthur retired.

COMMUNITY

Ella might have 'retired' but she seemed to have started on a very busy part of her life. She and Arthur continuing to welcome the migrants arriving from war-torn Europe and made lasting friendships. She served terms as President & Treasurer of the Uniting Church Women's Association and she was part of the Church Property Committee. Being part of this committee was a very serious responsibility and when the new St. David's Care building was being inspected Ella was forthright in her opinion and was heard to say, when inspecting the toilets, "No one in a wheel chair could get in here!"

Ella joined the Business and Professional Women's Club, Albury and was a member of the organising committee for the first Australian conference. Ella was made a life member of BPW in 1968.

Ella was an original member of Age Concern - School for Seniors - and received a Premier's Award and Life Membership of Age Concern in 2000. She supported the Albury Historical Society and was a member of the Independent Retirees.

Following Arthur's death in 1982, Ella set out to see the world and had two trips overseas and many travels within Australia. During this time she had two operations for cancer, one when she was 77 and another at the age of 87. At age 88 Ella sold her home and moved to Riverwood and then in July 2009 was moved to Mercy Place for the last phase of her life. Ella spent much of her life, inspiring and encouraging others and was a tower of strength for members of her family. She was on hand when friends needed help and support.

Perhaps we all need to offer some thanks to Ella's father who didn't want Ella and her siblings to milk cows because he did not want them falling asleep in class.

Presentations on Tija Savickis and Margaret Court will be published in future issues of the A&DHS Bulletin

REMINDER

**October Meeting LibraryMuseum
Supper**