

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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NOVEMBER 2010

507

REPORT ON THE OCTOBER MEETING (13/10/10)

A number of guests, including former members of the Albury Choral Society, joined members at the October Meeting to hear Noel Jackling "Interpreting A Bundle of Old Concert Programs." With the death of Dame Joan Sutherland being front-page news that day, a fitting tribute was paid to her and her music, while recalling her Albury performance of 1950.

The Society held its 3rd annual Antiques and Collectables Valuation Day in conjunction with Albury City on 9 October at the Albury LibraryMuseum. Elizabeth Stevens, of Chilton Antiques, Sydney, was kept busy valuing items throughout the day. Gratitude is extended to the staff of the LibraryMuseum for their assistance in making the day a success. Thanks also must go to June Shanahan for her organization of the event and to Jan Marsden for her help during the day.



VALE

T E (Tom) Jelbart OAM
Society member and former Treasurer, Tom Jelbart, passed away 18 October 2010 after a short illness.

Tom, like his father, had been a Polwarth sheep breeder at his *Stony Park West* property before moving in to Albury. He was also a respected judge at major sheep shows.

NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2010 7.30pm at Commercial Club Albury

Speakers: Mary Anderson telling the story of Norman Leslie Brumm - re-buried at Fromelles in 2010; Michael Browne - Family military history WW1; Chris McQuellin - Gunner Bernard Gowing; and Joe Wooding - Trophy Guns.
Hannah Patel will speak about creating digital stories.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Albury Drill Hall: where was it, when was it built and what happened to it?

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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

Tom has been a member of the Historical Society since 1995 and was treasurer from 1996 until 2000. Also in 2000 he was named Albury Citizen of the Year. Again in 2002 on Australia Day 26 January Tom received the Order of Australia Medal for services to primary industry.

A number of members of the Society attended his large funeral at St Matthew's Anglican Church, Albury on Thursday 21 October.

ANSWER TO QUESTION OF THE MONTH

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

Joe Wooding enlightened members and guests on this subject.

In the early days highways and by-ways were all used to move stock on the hoof. Some were being taken to new pasture while others went to new owners at stock sales.

As early as the 1850s, when the Scab Act was enacted, some control was exercised by district stock inspectors. With the introduction of the Robertson Land Act 1861, much tighter regulations were enforced. Permits and marking stock with a 'T' were just a few.

In 1880 a book called 'The Drover's Guide' was issued, giving regulations for the movement of stock and the use of travelling stock reserves.

Locally, for just on one hundred years from November 1888 the Albury Municipal Saleyards on Sydney Road was the destination for stock. The construction of these yards on the 27 acre site and the controversy surrounding it, along with the 1938 addition of the abattoir, is a story for another time.

The location of the first saleyards in Albury is unclear, but the *Border Post* of 14 July 1880 contains the following: 'T.F. Waller & Co will hold their next fortnightly sale at their newly erected Albury yards. Listed were 70 prime fat bullocks and 300 prime fat wethers. The auctioneers wish to draw the attention of their friends and the public in general to the fact that they have secured a fine site, easy of access for stock at all hours, in Olive street between Swift and Wilson streets, upon which they have erected most complete saleyards, in every way adapted for the proper display and classification of stock of every description.'

On 1 August 1925 the *Border Morning Mail* published the following:

'MUNICIPALITY OF ALBURY
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1919
ORDINANCE 60—DRIVING LOOSE ANIMALS

'Notice is hereby given that the Council has defined the following routes along which Loose Animals may be driven through Public Roads in the Municipality:-

'South Route—From Howlong Road to Smollett St., thence easterly to Wodonga Place, thence southerly to Ebden St., thence easterly to Macauley St., thence southerly to Bridge St., thence easterly to Schubach St., thence northerly to Sydney Road.'

The reverse of both these routes was also published.

Stock coming from, or going to, Victoria used the south route.

Sydney Road, which became Old Sydney Road when the Hume Dam was built and is now Borella Road, was the access from the east.

The route for stock coming over the Jindera Gap or down Wagga Road is less specific although one item of interest was discovered—Wagga Road and Griffith Road, together with Urana Road and Parnell Street, run parallel and are each 5 chains or 100 metres apart. It is just possible that this is implicated in the early stock route system leading out of the Hume Shire into what is now known as the Five Ways at the top of Mate Street. There is also reason to believe that Hague Street, thence into Kaitlers Road, was also used at one time. Mate Street certainly took some stock but it is unlikely they went as far south as North Street.

With little but scrub and swamp to the east of Mate Street, it seems more likely stock would have cut across to today's Xavier High School and the Showground. There were stock yards for railway loading and unloading at the corner of North Street and Jelbart Road.

The last permit issued by Mr. Alan Scammell of the Pastures Protection Board, now called Hume Livestock Health and Pest Authority, was in 1983 for a mob of cattle moved from Mungabareena to Wodonga via Doctors Point Road, Bridge Street, Nurigong Street to the Union Bridge at which point, for many years, a water trough was located.

Ironically, the trough, now filled with concrete, resides next to the Water Wheel at the corner of Wodonga Place and Ebden Street.

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.

Report of an address by Noel Jackling

Thirty-five members and guests were treated to a fine presentation on the Jackling collection by new Society member Noel Jackling on Wednesday evening 13 October at the Albury Library-Museum.

Noel came from his home in Melbourne to

spend a few days here doing research on the collection held at the Museum and to make the presentation to Society members and friends. He also took the time to do a live interview with Joseph Thomsen of ABC Goulburn Murray Radio on the history of the local ABC Concert Series.

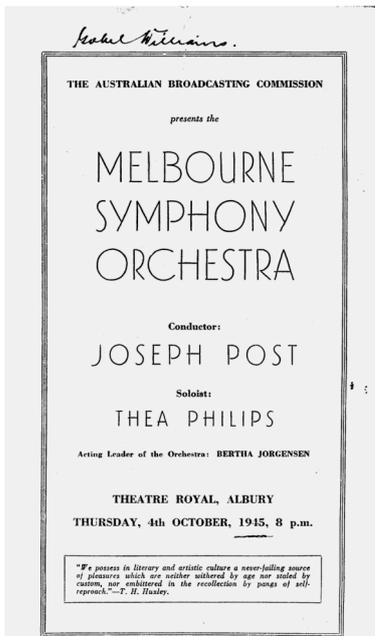
Noel's talk entitled "Interpreting a Bundle of Old Concert Programs. Classical music in Albury after World War II as seen through a collection of ABC and Albury Choral Society programs" was just that. He presented an illustrated power point presentation on this aspect of the social life of many of our Albury and district citizens during the post war period.

During his talk he was able to draw upon the programs and photographs collected both by his father, Albury Solicitor the late Stan Jackling, and senior Law Clerk, Miss Isobel Williams.

There was also an inspection of the artefacts in the Jackling/Williams Collections held by the Museum.

Noel's talk covered the ABC Concert series with the first of the 190 concerts being held in 1945 with Joseph Post as the conductor. The last being in 1993.

He also talked about the 31 Albury Choral Society concerts and the 1950 visit to Albury of the then young Joan Sutherland.



Program for the first ABC concert at Albury 4 October 1945 featuring the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra

Noel also told us about the early days of CEMA in Albury. CEMA was the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts in Australia and a local (Albury) group was formed in 1945.

Noel Jackling displayed one of the earliest programs in the collection.

The first Concert was on 4 October 1945 with the MSO and Joseph Post as Conductor and Thea Philips as the Soloist.

One of the major components to this history story was the eventual drop off in the ABC concert subscriptions and how the committee under Stan Jackling and Isobel Williams reinvigorated the series though a major advertising program which saw concerts being sold out and subscriptions reaching record levels in the 1960s.

Noel also told us of the performers from Bonegilla including Tibor Paul (Conductor), Dom Vildovas (Singer) and Etká Pottyondy (Pianist).

There will be a book titled *Classical music in Albury in the post-World War II era*. Keep an eye out for the announcement of the publishing date soon – it will be announced in the *Bulletin* and on the A&DHS web site.

Continuing on from Bulletin 506

TIJA SAVICKIS (1919-1993) SINGING TEACHER & MUSICAL THEATRE PRODUCER

Presented by Jan Hunter

Tija Savickis was born in Riga, Latvia. She trained as a pianist and singer, but singing was her great love. She was educated at Riga Conservatorium and Freiburg University in Germany. In the aftermath of WWII Tija and her husband Donats (1911-1982) were classified as displaced persons and migrated to Australia in 1949.

They were at Bonegilla Migrant Centre briefly before shifting into Albury to live. Madame Savickis began teaching voice production from a small room at St Davids Church in Olive Street. The minister's wife there, Mrs Armour, was a patron of the arts and took Tija under her wing. By the end of 1950 Tija had enough pupils to put on a concert.

Madame Tija Savickis was a dynamo. Her energy and productivity was amazing. Her manner was emotional and dramatic – she was a theatre in herself. While she could reduce



Members of the Sydney Symphony Orchestra photographed at Albury Railway Station, March 1950.

students to tears with her outbursts Tija also engendered loyalty and affection, and she encouraged and cajoled her students to perform beyond their aspirations. She used to say, "With my method, you will be able to sing until you die." And that is true.

Her first adult production was "The Bat" in 1952. In the starring roles were Pete Garnsey and Jeanette Crimmens. Those two were among Tija's first pupils as were Noel and Meryl Stephens. John Davis also featured in most of the fifties productions.

"The Bat" was put on under the auspices of The Savickis Studio Theatre Group and consisted of Tija's pupils only. However by 1958 two short works by Menotti were produced under the banner of The Tija Savickis Opera School. We are not really sure why there were various name changes to what was essentially the same group.

A mezzo soprano herself, Madame Savickis performed in Albury in 1953 at St Matthews Church. Dr Favaloro was the violinist and Dr Hogan played the clarinet. She also performed on the wider stage. In 1954 she sang at Australia's earliest church, St James in Sydney. This concert was reported in the *BMM* but also the Latvian language paper in Australia.

It is interesting to note that the early references to Tija Savickis in the *Border Morning Mail (BMM)* refer to her as a "New Australian", or say that she came "from Latvia". Looking back we see that Albury was coming to grips with the influx of people from other countries and in those early years of the Bonegilla Migrant Centre, the occupants stood out from the single culture that was Albury.

Tija Savickis was known as Madame Savickis. The story goes that Mrs Savickis was a bit hard for pupils to say and one of them suggested they call her Madame. That stuck and Madame Savickis it was from then on. Although many of her students called her "Mrs S", "Madame" features in programmes and write ups.

In the mid fifties Donat and Tija built a house at 479 Thurgoona Street overlooking the Botanic Gardens. This was a very contemporary house with artistic features throughout by Donat. There is a Latvian star on the front gate and the name "Klints" meaning "crag" or "cliff". This home was perfect for dinner parties. Tija loved to cook and entertain friends. Dr Savickis was a GP in Europe but rather than training again in Australia he practiced homeopathy and iridology from a home office with separate door, as well as keeping up his considerable interest in painting. In 1956 Tija and Donat applied for naturalization.

Musical theatre productions continued one after

the other. The fifties ended with "Oklahoma" and its very large cast. The sixties decade began with "Showboat" and there was a farewell concert by John Davis –the first of the Savickis students to study overseas.

In 1961, the annual Studio Quests began. These public concerts were an eisteddfod for Tija's pupils. Included in the programme would be a performance by the Savickis Children's Theatre. An out-of-town adjudicator would give critiques. No doubt a long night! In 1962, the guest adjudicator was Miss Dorothy Penfold, a well known musical presence from Melbourne.

The ever energetic Mme Savickis began teaching advanced singing in Melbourne; pupils were competing and winning in eisteddfods in Albury, Wagga, Ballarat and Wangaratta.

By 1963 the Opera School was performing in Melbourne and Albury and the Studio Quest was also put on in Melbourne. By 1963 Madame had a presence in Wagga and a Melbourne Studio committee.

Tija herself had performed in four Australian capital cities by this time, and she, and various pupils had been on ABC radio.

Productions such as "The Boy Friend", "South Pacific" and the children's theatre presentation of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" were first performed in the sixties and again in the seventies.

Mrs S. was dauntless in her efforts to improve the quality of her productions. She had an astute business sense and cultivated the right people. The Mayor, Cleaver Bunton was the patron of the Studio and she was relentless in her pursuit of publicity – all with the aim of getting the public to buy tickets for the musicals so that they could continue. In the fifties particularly, Tija "raided" Bonegilla Migrant Camp for people with theatre, or music experience. Later, for the first performances of "South Pacific" real soldiers from Bandi-



BRING IN YOUR MEMORABILIA

**A free event presented by the
Australian War Memorial
Saturday 6 November
at Albury LibraryMuseum
11 a.m. to 3 p.m.
(No weapons please)**

Staff will advise on how to best care for your war and home front memorabilia and may be able to assist with identification of objects.

ana were co-opted into the production. Over the years Tija issued press releases to keep her name in the public eye.

Popular light operas like “Annie Get your Gun”, “Brigadoon” and “Sound of Music” continued to be rolled out, with the Children’s Theatre also performing twice a year. A highlight was the 1965 production of “The Desert Song” which had a cast of 85 and ran for six nights.

By 1968 financing the productions became a problem. Profits in the past had gone to the Scouts, Freedom from Hunger and the proceeds of the Merry Widow performance in Lockhart went to the Lockhart hospital. The opera school was one of the first donors to the fund for a new Albury concert hall. For three years Tija sponsored a prize for a Modern Opera Aria at the South Street Eisteddfod at Ballarat.

As one can imagine, this relentless round of performances was hard going. So much behind the scenes work! Mrs. Savickis was listed in programmes as the publicity director, the producer, and director. But others were needed as well. Permission had to be obtained from the owners of the copyright to the music; bookings needed to be made a year ahead; letters went to and fro about the scores, etc. Mrs Eileen Rodgers’ name began to appear on the programmes, not only as a performer, but as the secretary – honorary of course. As well, venues had to be paid for ahead of time and places found for rehearsals. Over the years the halls at St David’s and St Patricks and Albury Public School halls and of course, private homes. Pam Parry and her ballet students were called upon regularly, as were other ballet schools.

Musicians needed to be found. This was often difficult. In the late fifties, I was the pianist for “The Student Prince” starring Pete Garnsey. Frankly it was beyond my abilities, but Mrs S, persevered. It was an enormous strain. One night, at the Savickis home, I burst into tears with tiredness. I couldn’t go on. Dr Savickis took me aside and quietly administered some drops. “Bach Rescue Remedy” I suppose, and I did go on. When I mentioned this to a few people, they nodded in agreement. “It’s a wonder we all didn’t have nervous breakdowns,” they said. While the big productions were only produced in Albury, concerts were performed around the district; Cobram, Walla, Holbrook etc.

Tija’s first singing teacher in Latvia was a disaster. Tija ended up with nodules on her vocal chords. She looked back at her study at the Freiberg University and wrote “...a new beginning.” Although popularly known as a singing teacher, Tija really taught voice production. She thought that non singers in the public eye needed voice production lessons so that they would not damage their vocal capabilities.

Her methods of teaching, which included a belt pulled tight around the waist, emphasized the voice coming from the front of the mouth. This was in contrast to most other teachers who emphasized the role of the throat. It was a case of “never the twain should meet” and rivalry about methods never ceased. Of course, the students of these different methods met regularly to compete against each other at the eisteddfods! There were several firsts in the seventies. The production of



Madame Tija Savickis. Photo taken in Albury in 1990, three years before her death.

“Fiddler on the Roof” in Albury is thought to have been the first time it was performed outside a metropolitan area.

Another first was Tija in an Army Dukw in 1974, guiding soldiers through the flood waters and tiger snakes. This expedition was to rescue the sets of the Opera School from a threatened building on the banks of the flooded river near Wodonga. Over the years these sets were made by voluntary local talent and included a revolving stage. Also part of the volunteers for many years was Mrs Amelia Brinkis who made costumes for many of the Academy productions. Students had to organise their own costumes, buying material from the Bruck Mills in Wangaratta and making them up themselves, or getting help from

Mrs Brinkis. Eventually Mrs Brinkis was given some remuneration and when a minor rebellion took place among the students, they were compensated for their costumes by being given their scores, or perhaps a few free lessons. Others in the area helped out with sewing on occasions, including Neil Giovanetti. The shows ran because people volunteered their time and talents because they enjoyed singing and performing for Albury audiences.

By 1980 The Tija Savickis Singing and Drama Academy had produced a staggering 52 productions in 30 years.

However, attendance at the musical shows

waned in the eighties. Some have suggested that the rise of clubs gave people a different sort of entertainment. Whatever the reason, the big productions were over, so The Savickis Opera School changed tack. A series of light hearted events in the clubs and other venues began, including the "Old Tyme Music Hall" at the Albury Golf Club. This production, complete with dinner, celebrated 35 years of teaching and musical production by Madame Savickis in Albury and district. Other venues were the Commercial and SS&A Clubs.

The last production of the Savickis Opera School was in 1986. It was "Kittiwake Island" an experimental modern musical and was held at the Wodonga Civic Theatre.

Over the next years Tija travelled. She gave Master Classes at Stuttgart University. In 1988 she was invited to give Master Classes in London, Paris and Los Angeles. By the early nineties, Tija's health had deteriorated and she died in 1993 with two of her long term students and good friends with her.

In 2000, International Women's Day was celebrated in Albury with a luncheon and exhibition of memorabilia and costumes made by Mrs Brinkis. It was a fitting occasion honoring a woman who had made a huge contribution to music in Albury. We end our story of Tija Savickis with her own words.... *"There is not a more beautiful instrument in the world than the human voice. With singing we can give people words, [and] beauty of sound to help them to forget every day's sorrow."*

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE JOURNALS

By John Craig

The Valley Genealogist Bega Valley GS, October 2010:

- Mary MacKillop and her legacy to the area.

Ancestor: Wagga Wagga FHS Journal, June 2010:

- S.W. Thornton. WWI, a non-combatant contribution

Stockman's Hall of Fame Magazine, July 2010:

- R.M. Williams, first CEO of Hall of Fame;
- Drover Dreaming, a poem.

Ances-tree, Burwood FHG, July 2010:

- German migrant ships to Australia, Part 17 *Peru* 1855

Wagga Wagga HS Newsletter, August/September 2010:

- Molly Ryan (stage name Marie Narelle) 1870/1941, a famous Australian soprano;

The Muster: Central Coast (Gosford) FHS Journal, August 2010:

- William Wood and the 2/95th Rifle Brigade. *The Argyle Bulletin, Goulburn HS & FHS*, August 2010:

- Tales of the Taralga Triangles, "The Flogging Posts".

Richmond River HS Bulletin, September 2010:

- Edward S. Sorenson. "The Bushman", writer of Bush Ballad and Verse.

History: RAHS Magazine, September 2010:

- Lachlan & Elizabeth Macquarie and the wonderful year of 1810.

Greater Hume Shire History on CD-ROM (Jindera Museum)

Insites. Hist. Houses Trust of NSW Magazine. September 2010:

- Friend or Foe: Macquarie and indigenous Australians.

BEQUESTS – LEAVING A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

It may seem unusual for the Society to consider having bequests as part of the Society's 'funding for the future program', but perpetual funding can give the acquisition program a stable future.

Leaving a gift in your Will to the Albury & District Historical Society is a caring way to benefit our community through a gift for the future. Members and families can leave gifts both large and small. These gifts recognise and enhance the role the Society can play in assisting our community through sponsorship of education programs, research, community development, and preservation of historical artefacts.

Should you ever consider a financial bequest, a consultation with your family lawyer is recommended.

Chris McQuellin.
President A&DHS

CHRISTMAS DINNER

We will have our Christmas function at the Commercial Club on Friday, 17 December .
6.30pm for 7.00pm

The cost of the 2-course Christmas buffet meal, with all the trimmings, will be \$33 per head. Bookings with money by the 8 December meeting please.

A wrapped gift to the value of \$5 will add to the entertainment of the evening.

A&DHS JUBILEE

The Committee invites members to submit some ideas to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Society in 1960.

Your suggestions can be forwarded to Helen Livsey or Chris McQuellin and a selection of the ideas will be presented to the membership for consideration.