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ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BULLETIN

AUGUST 2006 460

REPORT ON THE JULY MEETING (12/7/06) – by *Doug Hunter*

THE INTRODUCTION, SPREAD & EFFECTS OF PATERSON'S CURSE

INSIDE this ISSUE:

Page 2: "Mystery Objects".

Page 3: *Phillip Heywood* at The Somme; Albury Exhibition.

FUTURE EVENTS

13/9/06 September General Meeting of A&DHS will be an **EPHEMERA NIGHT**

What exactly are **ephemera**? Literally it means something lasting for only a day. But, a more accepted interpretation is an item of use or interest for a short time only. Examples are catalogues, advertising material, calendars, electioneering material, invitations, lottery tickets, theatre & concert programs, posters, produce labels, & much more.

Preferably, an item of ephemera has a story attached to it. In our case a story relating to Albury might be appropriate.

Please give thought to your item of ephemera for September. *

The guest speaker was *Bernard Hore* of "Rotherfield" Bowna, who spoke on the introduction, spread & effects of the Mediterranean herb *echium plantagineum*, better known as **Paterson's Curse**. *Bernard* is a descendent of two original pioneer families from the Bowna-Wymah district. His farm still contains some of the original selections they made. His father was born on the block originally owned by the *Patterson* family. That block has the dubious honour of being the site from which the herb, or weed, spread across south-eastern Australia.

It is generally accepted that *Paterson's Curse* began with Mrs *Elizabeth Patterson* who planted the pretty blue flowering herb in her garden at "Eltham" at Bowna in the 1860s. *Elizabeth Patterson* (nee *Grace*) was a

Illustration 1: *Paterson's Curse*:
Photo- *M J Katalinic*



native of County Donegal, Ireland & arrived in the Port Phillip District (Victoria) on 13 January 1842 aged 21. On 4 March 1844 she married *William Patterson* in Launceston, Van Diemens Land (Tasmania) & returned to Victoria to live at Narre Warren. *William* was a native of England, born in London 1818.

In the early 1860s the family moved to the Bowna district just north of Albury to select land under the

★ AUGUST 9 HISTORY MEETING

8pm Wed. August 9
Commercial Club, Dean Street Albury.

GUEST SPEAKER:

Graham Murray
"A History of Scouting in Albury"

QUESTION of the month:

Who was *Robert Baden Powell*? When did he first come to prominence; for what is he best remembered; & did he ever visit Australia?

Albury & District Historical Society Inc., PO Box 822, ALBURY, NSW, 2640.

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★**Subscriptions**★:
Individual Member: \$22
Family Members: \$30
Corporate Members: \$50
General Meetings: 2nd Wednesday of the Month, February to December.
Committee meets 4th Tuesday of the month, January to November.
A&DHS web page, see Regional Heritage link on

Museum web site.

A&DHS Committee Meeting, Tuesday 26/8/06, 5.15pm at Albury City Library.

ALBURY REGIONAL MUSEUM, Turks Head, Wodonga Place, Albury.
Open every day,
10:30am to 4:30pm.
Ph. 02 6051 3450
Website:
www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/museum

Robertson Land Act of 1861. They selected 108 acres 2 roads on the Murray River, about 4 miles upstream of the township of Bowna, being Portion 11 Parish of Cumberoona, County of Goulburn in the Land District of Albury. Elizabeth named the property "Eltham" after her birthplace in Ireland. The couple raised a family of 6 sons and 3 daughters at "Eltham". William died on 18 November 1882 & Elizabeth on 18 December 1887. Both were buried on the property.

Echium *advantageous* is a herb, or weed depending on your point of view, originating in the Mediterranean region & growing widely across Europe & Britain. Just how it was that the garden-minded lady brought it to Bowna is by no means certain. Did she bring seeds from Ireland, or did her mother send her plants from home after she married, or did she obtain plants in Australia. It is known that the plant was available as early as 1843 from a garden nursery at "Camden Park" run by John & Elizabeth Macarthur. Whatever the source, the Patterson family believes that the herb with the pretty purple flower was first planted in the garden at "Eltham", & that from there it spread throughout the district, to Victoria & NSW, & as far as South Australia. Spreading was not difficult. A single plant can produce between 13,000 & 30,000 seeds depending on how heavily it is grazed. Seed can adhere to animals, or can be mixed with grain to achieve distribution. Seed can remain fertile for 5 years. So it is a very efficient multiplier.

At the time of Elizabeth's death in 1887, her eldest son Richard Eyre Patterson was managing "Eltham". The probate listing of the property was £135/12/6. In 1889, Richard sold "Eltham" to his wife's brother Patrick Hore. Patrick & his father Andrew Hore already owned "Mugwee" about 4 miles upriver from "Eltham", so the purchase made good farming sense. There was already a strong relationship between the Patterson & Hore families with two Patterson boys married to two Hore girls. Both properties are now submerged under the waters of Lake Hume.

The plant is known by several names: Salvation Jane, Riverina Bluebell & Paterson's Curse. The

'Paterson' is spelt with one 't' even though the family name is spelt with double 't'. The plant names reflect the different opinions of the plant. It is not without its friends. For example, bee keepers love it because it makes very good honey. We have bee hives on our property each year although one of my sons believes the bees might help to spread the weed. In South Australia, farmers got to like it because it needs very little rain to get started & it can hang on during drought so can be used for feed. Photographers too appreciate the picturesque landscape when the plant is in full flower. I have seen tourists stop their cars along the road to photograph a purple hillside, & bridal parties sometimes drive out from town to use the brilliant blue paddocks as background for wedding photos.

Paterson's Curse is a herb & its medicinal properties have been assessed. "Rotherfield" is another of our farms. My father used to keep his horses in a paddock near the house. The horses were hand fed so had no need to touch the Paterson's Curse & it grew rampant. The CSIRO asked if they could use this crop to conduct tests on the properties of the plant. They cut it, dried it & analysed it. The results were promising & Sydney University took up the work. The University asked if we would set aside another paddock for the weed to grow & flower. Then a contractor stripped the crop & got the seed. We were paid for it in the first year. It was something of a novelty & in fact made more money for us than wheat or oats.

In the meantime I began to use the horse-paddock as a ram-paddock. Regarding transportation, horses had been superseded by motor bikes. Today there is no Paterson's Curse in the ram paddock; so years of intensive grazing can eliminate it.

The University asked us to repeat the growing of Paterson's Curse the following year, but they had no money to pay us. We were happy to help & did so, but we didn't make much out of it that year.

Professor Colin Duke of Sydney University did discover beneficial properties in the oil extracted from the seed of Paterson's Curse. In particular it is high in fatty acids, omega 3 & 6. Currently the main source of these is from fish. Fish

stocks are falling so Paterson's Curse might one day become a replacement source. The oil has potential in alternative treatments too. For example, it is thought to be superior to Evening Primrose.

For the grazing industry, the big problem with Paterson's Curse is that it takes over from other plants. The first 5 points of rain will get the plant started & it can grow to the size of a dinner plate smothering the smaller grasses underneath. It does not live the year round, but dies after it flowers. Nothing will eat the dry stems with their furry covering, so the farmer is left with a drought because the grass has been smothered.

Paterson's Curse can be harmful to stock. It causes liver damage in horses & it can harm other stock if eaten with other weeds. Even so, my father often said he had seen stock die, not from it, but from want of it. Mr Leo Plunket of "Willow Park" maintained it had value as feed saying "one leaf can keep a ewe going for a day."

Paterson's Curse was declared a noxious weed in Victoria in 1911. In 1916, however, the ratepayers of Hume Shire petitioned the Council asking that the weed be exempt from any noxious weed declaration. The reasons for this might have been its value as stock feed, or the cost of controlling the weed on farms & the possibility of being fined for failing to comply.

Paterson's curse can be controlled by spraying, but we don't like using chemicals. So when CSIRO came along at the end of the 1980s & asked if we would participate in a trial using insects, we were happy to do so. We erected a gauzed cage around a patch of Paterson's Curse & the CSIRO released 100 beetles into it. We had to keep the weed inside the cage alive so had to water it when the weather was dry. The beetles are ladybird size & attack the plant by eating out the centre of the stem. The experiment was kept very quiet. The CSIRO did not want anyone sneaking in & releasing the beetles before the full effects were known. The beetle only lived a year, but did reproduce quite well. Nearly 20 years on, we would have to say the results are not all that good. We still have beetles, but we also still have plenty of Paterson's Curse! There have been other experi-

This space is available
for **ADVERTISING**

ments with other insects & perhaps we did not get a particularly good batch of beetles. *

MYSTERY OBJECTS

At the July meeting the 'mystery objects' were handed round the group & caused great interest & amusement. One was identified fairly accurately; the others were guessed at but generally stumped the meeting. Then all was revealed:

John Craig's 'stick with a screw protruding near one end' turned out to be a *bottle opener* from the gem fields at Sapphire in Qld.

Doug Hunter's object was a tool used to turn dowel ends on chair rungs.

Peter Whitbourn's items looked like tools to cut dough or pizza. They turned out to be wheelwrights' tools; one was a single handed spoke shave used to trim the ends of spokes, & the other to measure the circumference of a wooden rim in order to cut the steel tire to length.

Max Barry brought the house down with a *brass ring with a pin forming the diameter*. It turned out to be a **ferret muzzle**. The ring slipped over the ferret's nose & the pin slipped behind the canine teeth to stop the ferret spitting it out.

There were requests to repeat this segment again soon. *

Answer to 'QUESTION for JULY': (When did the AWDC commence, & what premises did the organisation occupy during its 3 decades of existence?)

Jill Wooding, Geoff Hamilton, Ann Brennan, Howard Jones, Helen Livsey & June Shanahan contributed answers.

The AWDC commenced with the signing of an agreement between the Commonwealth & States on 23 Oct 1973 & the first meeting of the interim board was held on 22 January 1974. A building at **Bandiana Army Camp** was used for orientation of early staff.

Thereafter, an **information centre** on the corner of Kiewa & Smollett Streets & some offices upstairs; the **Hub Arcade** Kiewa Street (demolished 2005); the **house** on the corner of Kiewa & Engelhardt Streets (formerly the residence of **Dr Favalaro**, demolished c.1980); &

Produced with free software by the Open Source Community "Knoppix 5 Live DVD Linux".



Illustration 2: **Captain P H Heywood, Manchester Regiment 1918, (later owner of "Hawksview" near Albury), - & District Commissioner of Scouts.**

upstairs offices in High Street Wodonga. In 1976, the Corporation moved to a new building in West Wodonga (now **Wodonga TAFE**). This building had been built for the Road Safety Authority, an organisation that did not eventuate. The Corporation moved to a new building at Thurgoona (now CSU) in 1987. Finally the Corporation moved to its **present building in Macaulay Street Albury in 1995.**

Other buildings built & occupied by elements of the Corporation were the **Nursery on Padman Drive & the Laboratory in Thurgoona.** *

GENERAL NOTICES

COLLINS FAMILY

Does anyone know anything about **William & Eunice Collins** who lived at 728 Pemberton Street Albury, circa 1970? We would like to contact their family.

ALBURY RAILWAY

INTERPRETIVE BROCHURE

Proof copy of the brochure has been received. Also a cheque for \$1,120 from the local *Railway Preservation Society* to print the brochures. Work to date to nominate the Railway Station & Yard for **National Heritage Listing** has been financed by a grant from Albury City Council. Thanks to **Bruce Pennay** for managing the project.

UIVER

It is pleasing to see a newspaper report featuring the 1/12 scale model of the *Uiver*. Congratulations to **Gerry Curtis** & his team at the *Manual Arts Centre*. We understand that Council is considering the most appropriate place to display the model to tell the *Uiver* story.

BATTLE OF THE SOMME

Ninety years ago this battle raged in northern France. The 13th Field Artillery Battery (The Albury Battery) was fighting at **Pozières**. Lieutenant **Phillip Heywood** was leading his platoon in the 16th Battalion, the Manchester Regiment. These stories, & more, will be part of an **exhibition at the Albury Library in August 2006.**

JOURNEYING through the JOURNALS - by June Shanahan

MURRUMBIDGEE ANCESTOR:

The Journal of Wagga Wagga & District Family History Society Inc.No. 88 June 2006

1. Sources for Military History - Using the Times & London Gazette On-Line.
2. Executions at Wagga Gaol from 1871 to 1890.

THE PARRAMATTA PACKET:

Parramatta Family History Group Newsletter. Volume 12 No. 2 July-October 2006

1. Parramatta District Hospital
2. St. Patricks Church Parramatta.

NEWSLETTER: WAGGA WAGGA & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC. No. 360, June-July 2006

1. The Great White Touring Train.

STOCKMAN'S HALL OF FAME & OUTBACK HERITAGE CENTRE:

Volume 97 - July 2006

1. New CEO for Stockman's Hall of Fame.

U3A ALBURY-WODONGA NEWSLETTER - July 2006. *