

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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FEBRUARY 2007

465

VALE GERRY CURTIS

Members will be saddened to hear that A&DHS stalwart Gerry Curtis passed away on 15 January 2007.

His funeral was held at St Patrick's Church Albury on 17 January. An estimated 450 attended. In accordance with Gerry's wish his ashes were scattered at the Murray River at the spot where Hume and Hovell first saw the river and where Gerry spent countless hours in his kayak.

Gerry attended the inaugural meeting of the Historical Society 8 November 1960. He joined the committee in 1985 and served in various positions for 11½ years including 8 years as president. Gerry was made a life member in 1997.

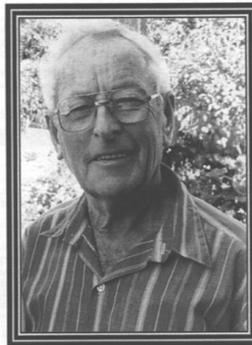
Gerry was born at Sunbury, Victoria and came to Albury at the age of five. He left school aged 15 and served an apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker. He served in the RAAF during WWII, returning to Albury in 1945 to continue his cabinetmaking business. He married Mary Stokes in 1948 and they raised 3 daughters, Anne, Julie & Sue.

Gerry had a lifelong interest in

Mass of Christian Burial
for the Repose of the Soul of

Michael Gerald (Gerry) Curtis

28th April 1918 - 15th January 2007



St Patrick's Church
Albury
17th January 2007

aviation. In 1934 he witnessed the landing at Albury racecourse of the KLM airliner *Uiver* during the Melbourne Centenary air race. As a 16 year old he built scale models of four of the planes in the race. The model of the *Uiver* formed the basis for a larger model built under Gerry's guidance late last year at the Manual Activities Centre.

Gerry was untiring in his efforts to tell people about Albury's heritage. He conducted heritage walks during Heritage Week and more recently presented slide shows illus-

trating Albury's history to community groups across the city.

Gerry worked on the Cumberoona, but perhaps his proudest Historical Society achievement was organising the construction of a lych-gate at the entrance to the Albury Pioneer Cemetery.

* * *

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY

14 FEBRUARY 2007

8pm at Commercial Club

Albury

Bring, show & tell night!

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

When were the serious drought years for Albury in the 20th century?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Report on December meeting	Page 2
Heritage Festival plan	Page 2
Burke & Wills link	Page 3
Christmas Party	Page 3
Albury City - 60 years	Page 3
Margaret Court Cup beginning	Page 4
Publications for sale	Page 4

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$22

Family: \$30

Corporate: \$50

History Meetings: 2nd Wednesday of the month 8pm at Commercial Club Albury.

Committee meets 4th Tuesday of the month 5.15pm at Albury City Library.

A&DHS website:

www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/museum/heritage

MURRAY VALLEY COACHES

Professor Dirk Spennemann was our guest speaker. Professor Spennemann researches and teaches cultural heritage management at Charles Sturt University, Albury. He spoke on the history of Murray Valley Coaches; the topic of his new book *Buses Up & Down the Murray: the Murray Valley Coach Company of Albury*. Professor Spennemann spoke of his puzzlement as to why motor passenger services grew out of the trucking industry rather than being a natural progression from the declining horse drawn coach industry. "It seemed to be a very different breed of operator which came out of the trucking industry and started the bus lines," he said. District residents might remember the founders of MVC, Vern and Keith Lawrence.

Coach operators experienced difficulty with regulations aimed to prevent competition with the railways. Allowable routes were mainly those running east-west. The Murray Valley satisfied this requirement because railways radiating out from Melbourne only touched at points along the way. A traveller wishing to go from Albury to Swan Hill, for example, had to go to Melbourne then back to Swan Hill. A service that would take him directly from one town to the other was well patronised.

Murray Valley Coaches developed its business to integrate coaches, overnight accommodation and even a tourist venture on the Murray, a paddle-steamer.

The twenty-five year history of the company, beginning in 1934 is an important segment in the history of Albury and district and we commend Professor Spennemann for his latest work.

Buses Up & Down the Murray: the Murray Valley Coach Company of Albury is published independently by Heritage Futures International PO Box 3440 Albury. It retails at \$24.95.

* * *

ANSWERS TO QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What is known about migrants

from the Indian sub-continent in Albury's early history, and what happened to them?

Many members responded to the question, drawing on books, maps, newspapers, personal and anecdotal sources. Information centred on the role of Indian hawkers.

INDIAN CEMETERY

Albury's most tangible link with the Indian community was the patch of land just north of Union Road where cremations were carried out. This land, known as the Indian Cemetery, is now Jelbart Park. An old map shows the area designated "R.6744 For Cemetery. Notified 14 July 1888." A tiny section in the north-west corner is marked "Unsectarian Burial Ground."

Jan Marsden's friend lived at the corner of Dick and Union Roads and attended the Lavington Public School. The road to school took her past the 'Indian Cemetery' (later Jelbart Park). One day in 1928, on her way to school, she watched a funeral pyre being prepared with firewood and lots of butter, or possibly ghee. On her return, after school, all that remained was ash and one log still burning. The men in charge she described as 'sheiks' and remembers them as rather untidy old fellows with grubby turbans. It seems one old man had died and his friend decided to take the ashes back to India. Before he went he called to some customers and gave them gifts. Jan's friend and her sister still have pieces of napery they were given.

Des Martin in his book *A Tale of Two Cities* (1981) wrote: "For many years the markers on long dead funeral pyres stood there, for it was not actually a burial ground, but a burning ghat from whence the ashes of the dead were sent home to be cast into the Ganges." (p.180)

When Mary Leithead moved to the UPA village in Moore Street 25 years ago it was said that the row of trees on the other side of the road near the swimming pool was where the Indians were buried.

G Buxton in his book *Riverina 1861-1891* (1967) says:

"Indian hawkers were regular monthly visitors to the farms [in 1880s] and often several would arrive together, their baskets of

PLANS FOR HERITAGE FESTIVAL

3—18 March

Preliminary arrangements have been made for the Society to visit St Hilaire homestead at Thurgoona during Heritage Week. Our thought is to hold a Garden Party in the grounds. The owner of the property, Catherine O'Neill is happy to conduct a tour and to speak about the history of the house and her plans for its restoration. We will give more details as plans are finalised.

drapery and working clothes on their heads or over one shoulder. Some travelled on foot, others with horses, and in return for horse feed worked at moving chaff.

They rarely bought food, but in exchange for potatoes, meat, milk and flour, offered safety pins, handkerchiefs, pipes, medicines, combs & brushes, or even mouth-organs. At night they camped in the shed, lighting little fires outside." (p.201)

Anne Holloway has childhood memories of hawkers calling on a regular basis at their home in Tallangatta Valley and her mother buying their wares.

RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL CONFUSION

The religion and cultural activities of the Indians seemed to confuse the wider public. Were they Sikh as many of their names suggest, or Muslim, or Hindu, or Buddhist?

Buxton says, in court, "Indian hawkers swore on the Koran." (p.228)

Albury Daily News Monday July 17, 1906 was quite confused when it reported that the cremation of Devan Singh would take place the following day on the Albury Common. Devan Singh, a native of Hindustan, died at Albury hospital aged 40. He was described as a "votary of Buddhism." His relatives had asked that his ashes be returned to India to be committed to the "sacred waters of the Ganges".

ADN of the following day gave a detailed description of the ceremony including the presence of Senior-Sergeant Musgrave and Mounted Constable Palmer "to maintain order should the occasion warrant." No such occasion arose,

the ceremony was dignified with 'nothing grotesque or bizarre' about it. Also present were co religionists: Esher Singh, who was master of the religious ceremonies and read a prayer from the 'Hindoo Bible', and Bota Singh, Ernam Singh, Bud-dan Singh, Bishan Singh, Junda Singh and Unda Singh.

Two days later, the *Daily News* reported the man's ashes were collected by his 'brother Buddhists' and the whole site of the fire 'carefully cleaned up'.

REPUTATIONS

The reputation of the Indian community seems to have varied from welcome visitors with rolls of bright material, needles and cottons for sale to unwelcome and troublesome callers.

'AFGHAN HAWKERS' was the headline of an article in the *Albury Banner* 7 May 1897 brought by Helen Livsey.

"A good many complaints have come to hand in regard to the Indian hawker nuisance, these peripatetic traders apparently carrying matters with a very high hand in some of the country districts.

"Repeated complaints have been made to the police from residents of the Gerogery district where there is a regular camp of the hawkers, a police officer was told off to investigate, and he reports as the result of his enquiries that in every house at which he called, with two exceptions, the people strongly objected to the licensing of the men referred to.

"In several instances they are reported as having 'forced their way' into houses in the absence of men, and frightening the women into buying whether they liked it or not.

In one case the wife of a fettler

had to send for some men working in the neighbourhood to get the hawker out of the house. A school teacher at Old Gerogery makes a similar complaint.

"Another cause of grievance to persons residing near the camp is that the Afghans are in the habit of going about in the morning clothed in the garb of our first parents before the introduction of the fig-leaf costume."

The same issue of the *Banner* reported that two hawker's licences were refused because this class of men were not suitable to hold a licence.

The community spirit of many of the Indian residents was shown in 1905 when a donation of £60 was made to the Albury Hospital. The *ADN* 22 September 1905, contained a list of 50 donors from Albury, Henty, Tallangatta, Coolamon, Urana, Howlong and Yackandandah.

The donation was in "gratitude ... for the treatment and attention bestowed on their countrymen at different times when inmates of the Hospital." There had been some dissention in the Indian community when Khuda Bukhah had suggested the donation. A few thought a 'spree' a better way to spend the money. This attitude was strongly resented by the great majority.

Doug Hunter remembers his mother telling of a hawker, Nuttah Singh, who called at farms in the Urana district in the early 1920s. His family in India urged him to come home which he did only to return rather quickly. "You are my friends," he told the farm families when he next visited. Seems his relatives in India tried to poison him for his money.

* * *

ALBURY'S LINK WITH THE BURKE AND WILLS EXPEDITION.

Robert O'Hara Burke who led the 1861-2 expedition to cross the continent had strong links to Beechworth. But did you know Albury has a tenuous link to the expedition too.

In October 1860, Burke, having fallen seriously behind schedule in his journey from Melbourne to Wilcannia, arranged for the paddle-steamer *Moolgewanke* owned by Captain George Johnston to carry supplies and equipment from Tarcoola to Menindee. Five years earlier, Johnston had been the captain of the first paddle-steamer to reach Albury. At that time Johnston had been working for Captain Francis Cadell.

Burke already knew Francis Cadell. Before setting out from Melbourne, he had refused Cadell's offer to transport supplies and heavy equipment by sea and river all the way to Menindee free of charge. Burke refused the offer because he believed Cadell had opposed his appointment as leader of the expedition, so chose instead to spend months transporting the tonnes of supplies by wagon.

I did say the Albury connection was tenuous!

Sarah Murgatroyd's book, *The Dig Tree*, an account of the ill-fated Burke & Wills Expedition, is good reading. It is available from Albury Library.

* * *

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Twenty-two members and guests dined at the Commercial Club on 1 December. Catherine Browne ran a \$2-present exchange game that created great amusement. A banana was the most highly sought after present.

Jill Wooding scored highest marks in the 'World's Easiest Quiz'.

* * *

ALBURY: 60 YEARS A CITY

Congratulations to *The Border Mail* for publishing the 24 page supplement marking Albury's 60 years as a city. Editor Nick Russell and his team, especially the writer Howard Jones, are to be commended on the fine articles and photographs. Albury City Events Leader Ros Walls gathered an inter-



Members in festive mood enjoying the evening at the Commercial Club.

esting collection of reminiscences from long-time residents.

Copies of the supplement may still be obtained from *The Border Mail* Office, Cnr Dean & Kiewa Streets Albury, or PO Box 491 Wodonga 3691.

* * *

COMMENCEMENT OF MARGARET COURT CUP

By June Shanahan

In the year 2000 Phillip Shanahan (my son) and Dan O'Connell International Tennis Federation (ITF) coach from Fiji were driving back to Albury from a Junior Tennis Tournament in Shepparton. The conversation of course was always tennis and Dan suggested to Phillip that Albury could hold a Junior tournament to follow the Shepparton tournament. A seed was planted. Phillip rang his aunty, tennis great Margaret Court, and asked if the proposed event could be named after her. She approved, and planning began.

The task facing Phillip Shanahan was daunting, but with the help of a committee of volunteers and the encouragement of his mother, June Shanahan, planning proceeded.

The first Committee comprised: Phillip Shanahan President, June Shanahan Secretary, Trish Moore Public Relations, Lyn and John Pratt, Michael Hogan, Charles Le Mesurier, & Bill Mulraney,

Keen interest in the event was soon evident and the committee realized the competition would exceed the capacity of the Albury courts, so the Wodonga facility was hired as well. In January 2001 the inaugural Margaret Court Cup for junior tennis players was held. There were 124 entries.

Each year since then, competitors in the tournament have grown in number. This year, 2007, there were 406 entries. Phillip Shanahan's aim is to reach the 500 mark to match the Homebush tournament.

The tournament has an international component. Each year, Dan O'Connell, ITF Director in Fiji, brings a group of promising Pacific Island youngsters to compete. In a reciprocal arrangement, a group of Albury juniors spend a week at the Tennis Camp in Fiji.

Albury has had great success, winning the Margaret Court Cup for

team competition six times. However this year, 2007, Newcastle took well deserved honors over the home team.

Competitors in the 14 girls' singles play for the Margaret Court Cup Perpetual Trophy in memory of Jessica Dean, a promising young player from Lithgow, who died in a tragic accident in Fiji.

Six players from this year's tournament have gained wildcard entry to the Junior Australian Open. This shows the high standard the Margaret Court Cup has achieved.

* * *

Bulletin Contributions.

Editor would like short contributions about Albury's history.

SCHLUE FAMILY

Debra Mould, one of our out-of-town members, referred an enquiry to us from John Schlue seeking descendents of Henry and Carl Schlue who immigrated in the 1850s and had a vineyard at Rutherglen for a time. He notes there is a Schlue Court in Barnawatha. John has historical detail of the brothers,

and now would like to contact any living members of the family.

* * *

LONGCASE CLOCK

Albury connection

Mr Chris Morris of the Furniture History Society of Victoria has come across an Australian cedar long case clock possibly made in 1886 by S Hart of Albury. Some repairs were done a Mr Butler and the clock was refurbished by Hart again in 1916. The information is scratched on the back plate of the movement and written on the case in pencil. The present owner purchased the clock at a clearing sale in Brighton 30 years ago. Mr Morris is restoring the item and is interested to know its provenance. Does anyone know anything about Hart(s) or Butler, clock makers in Albury in the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries?

* * *

MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL KATALINIC

Does Michael have documents of yours that you would like back? Michael is having a clean out of papers and is happy to hear from anyone who has lent him documents that he has not yet returned. Contact Michael at 6025 9347 or 4/440 Hall Street Lavington 2641.

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PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

History sheet packs containing 9 topics:

Wines and Vines The Murray River
Wodonga Place Street Names
Railways Beef Cattle
The Gold Era First 25 Years
Albury Pioneer Cemetery
 Pack \$4.00 ea

Videos
Hume Dam Construction 1919-1936
 VCR Cassette \$25.00 ea DVD \$20.00 ea
 (Members \$23.00 and \$18.00)

Books

Albury/Wodonga by Jean Macdonald Vols 1 & 2
Set of two \$5.00

On the Home Front by Bruce Pennay
(1 only) \$5.00

Are you really going to Australia? by Inga Krain
\$4.00 ea

Good Old Albury by Howard Jones
(8 only) \$15.00 ea

John Craig has stock available at our History Meetings, or write to
PO Box 822 Albury. {All mailed items plus postage}

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