

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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JULY 2007

470

REPORT ON THE JUNE MEETING (13/6/07)

The meeting proceeded at a lively pace combining the business of the AGM, well researched answers to the Question of the Month and the highlight, a fascinating address by Mr Rowan Chalmers-Borella on his unique experience of growing up as the son of a VC winner.

Rowan has lived in Albury since 1946, being educated at Albury High School and Albury Technical College. He served his apprenticeship as a carpenter & joiner and worked in the building trade, the last 15 years in partnership with his youngest son Richard at Borella Cabinets.

Rowan has had a keen interest in cricket and football, being honoured with life membership in the North Al-

bury Cricket Club and also life membership with the North Albury Football Past Players Association.

OFFICE-BEARERS & COMMITTEE

There are changes to the committee for 2007/08. June Shanahan did not seek re-election, so Helen Livsey was elected secretary. There were no nominations for treasurer so it was passed to the committee, as were the positions of junior vice-president and auditor. Jill Wooding and Howard Jones joined the committee.

Subsequent to the AGM, Chris McQuellin has agreed to be treasurer and June Shanahan junior vice-president. A full list of positions is shown in the panel below. The appointment of an auditor remains a task for the committee.

NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY

11 JULY 2007

7.30pm at Commercial Club
Albury

Speaker: Mr Ron Ahern
"My experiences as a tailor
in Albury."

NOTE CHANGE OF TIME

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

The Hume Freeway is the latest change to the road to Sydney. What have been the earlier routes through and from Albury?

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

My life as the son of a	
Victoria Cross winner	Page 2
Answer to Question of Month	Page 4
Adelyn Clothing Factory	Page 5
Library/Museum volunteers	Page 5
Base Hospital archives	Page 6
Journals	Page 6
Harold Mair Bridge	Page 6
Membership renewal	Page 6

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

Patron: Harold Mair OAM

Public Officer: Helen Livsey

President: Doug Hunter

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Vice-Presidents: Joe Wooding, June Shanahan

Secretary: Helen Livsey 02 6021 3671

Treasurer: Chris McQuellin

Minute Secretary: Jan Marsden

Committee: Helen Pithie, John Craig, Carole

Whitbourn, Jill Wooding, Howard Jones and

Ray Gear

Journals & Stock: John Craig

Honorary Auditor: tba

Membership list & Bulletin dispatch: Ray Gear

Bulletin Editor: Doug Hunter 02 6021 2835
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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

**MY LIFE AS THE SON OF
A VICTORIA CROSS
WINNER**

By Rowan Chalmers-Borella
**ALBERT
CHALMERS-BORELLA**

Albert Chalmers Borella was born in Borung (near Wedderburn) on 7/8/1881; that is 126 years ago, but that doesn't make me 100 years old just yet. My father was 52 when I was born.

Dad's mother died when he was only four and he lived with his grandparents before returning to help his father on a farm near Echuca

DALY RIVER

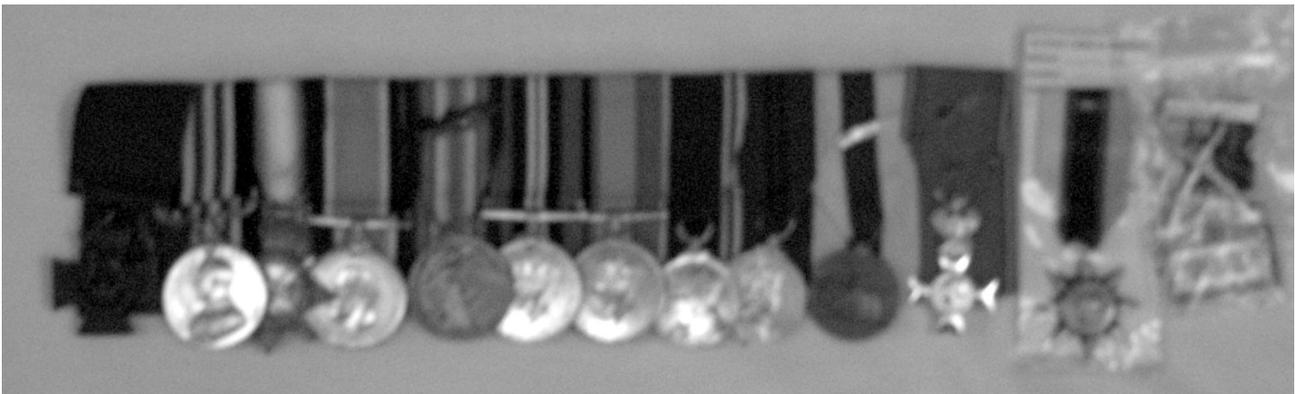
In early 1913, after two years with the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade,

one of the best on the Daly. He cleared his land and erected 3 miles of fencing and dug a well 30 feet deep."

Dad worked his block for two years before, climate, remoteness and lack of promised support forced him off. The land flooded in the wet, but there was no water in the dry. Produce sent to Darwin rotted on the wharf when the ship failed to arrive. He abandoned the block in 1915, and set out for Darwin to enlist. When the horse went lame he walked 88 miles, swimming a flooded river along the way. He used his only money to pay an outstanding debt to the Lands Board, then found there was

to Sergeant in January 1917; Mentioned in Dispatches (MID) in February, and awarded a Military Medal (MM) the following month for conspicuous bravery in the attack on Malt Trench. He was commissioned in April 1917 and on 17/18 July 1918 he was awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions while leading his platoon near Villers-Bretonneux. Keith Attiwill of the *Argus* newspaper wrote this account of what happened:

"Borella & his platoon 'hopped the bags' with the first wave in the attack near Villers-Bretonneux, just east of Amiens. When Borella saw a machine gun firing through



Medals awarded to Capt A Chalmers-Borella: Victoria Cross, Military Medal, 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-18, Victory Medal with oak leaf denoting Mentioned in Dispatches, British War Medal 1939-45, Australian General Service Medal, Coronation Medal (George VI), Coronation Medal (Elizabeth II), Somme Medal with palm (France), Albert Cross with palm (Belgium), Gallipoli Commemorative Star, and Front Line Infantry Service Medal.

Dad took up a block on the Daly River in Northern Territory. Although there was a copper mine operating nearby and a Jesuit Mission further along the river, the Daly River area was remote in those days and is still.

Peter Forrest, in his book, *The Spirit of the Daly*, wrote, "Albert Borella worked energetically on his land, building a house which was notably

no recruiting office in Darwin. He borrowed the boat fare to Townsville from a generous gentleman whom he was able to repay when the two met again in France.

WORLD WAR I

Albert Chalmers Borella enlisted on 3.3.1915 and was allotted to the 26th Infantry Battalion. Following service on Gallipoli, the battalion went to France where Dad was wounded in the battle of Pozieres. Dad was promoted

the Australian barrage, he ran ahead of his platoon into the barrage, shot two German machine gunners with his revolver and captured the gun. When he got back to his platoon it had been reduced to 10 men & 2 Lewis guns. The eleven pressed on towards the strongly held Jaffa Trench. Using his revolver and later his rifle with deadly effect Borella charged into the enemy. His example was inspiring and before long the pla-

toon had shot the enemy in the trench & captured it. Two large dugouts were located and 30 prisoners taken. The Germans re-organised and counter attacked twice in strong force. The second time out numbering Borella's men 10 to 1, but the Aussies did not flinch. Borella showed such amazing coolness and determination that his platoon put up heroic resistance and twice repulsed the enemy."

Lieutenant Albert Chalmers Borella received his Victoria Cross from King George V at Buckingham Palace in October 1918.

AFTER THE WAR

After the war Dad took up a soldiers settlers block at Cavendish near Hamilton and ran a sheep & dairy farm. Dad stood as a National Party candidate for Dundas in 1924 and was only narrowly defeated.

Dad married Elsie Love at Hamilton in 1928. I was the third of 4 sons born at Hamilton. Dad added a hyphen to his name by deed-poll in 1939 to read Chalmers-Borella. This was so some of the honour of the VC would go to his mother's family - the Chalmers.

Dad re-enlisted in 1939 and served at Rushworth and Whorouly Prisoner of War camps until his discharge in 1945. He had been promoted to Captain in Sept 1942.

Our family moved to Albury in 1946. Dad died in Feb 1968 at the age of 86 and is buried in the Presbyterian section of the Waugh Road cemetery.

The North Territory government claims Albert Borella as their only VC winner, al-

though he had only lived there two and bit years.

Parks and streets named in honour of Capt Albert Chalmers-Borella include:

Borella Park-Memorial Park with citation in Darwin, and Borella Circuit, Jingili;

Borella Park with plaque in Wedderburn Vic (near where Dad was born);

Borella Club at Bandiana Army Camp;

Borella Crescent in Canberra; and

Borella Road in Albury which is to be rededicated on 17th/18th July 2007 following completion of Hume Freeway.

MY RECOLLECTIONS

Now to speak on how my life has been effected being the son of a VC winner.

I could probably sum it up in one sentence--- when I read the citation, or paper reports of events leading up to Dad winning the medal, I still choke up with emotion and pride even though it was 89 years ago and 15 years before I was born. Dad was a very quiet and modest person, who seldom spoke of his war years and had to be asked a question before details were revealed. As Keith Attiwill of the *Argus* described him: "Quietly spoken, a man of deeds and not words." We have found out more about his life since his death than we knew before.

One of the few recollections I have of the farm at Hamilton was when I rolled off the rump of a horse Dad was riding; I would have been about five at the time. I wasn't hurt because I landed in the mud.

In 1939 Dad was driving the old Dodge from Hamilton

to Deniliquin to see his brother. I was the only passenger; I guess Mum had to stay home to milk the cows. The journey seemed to take a week. On arriving at Uncle Charlie's place, my Auntie came out to tell Dad he was wanted on the phone. The war had just broken out & the phone call was from Victoria Barracks in Melbourne to say: "Report to the Barracks immediately." I guess we stayed the night then set out for Melbourne next day. I can still remember sitting in the car outside this old building-covered in ivy, for what seemed like hours. At last Dad came out and took me to his sister's place in Carnegie. I never went back to the farm as Mum and my 3 brothers came to Sandringham to live about 3 months later. We all went to Sandringham East School.

I can remember the search lights in the sky over Melbourne. We were even evacuated to Yarra Junction for a while and so to another school.

We moved from Melbourne to Wangaratta for a short while before moving again to Gapsted as Dad was then at the POW camp at Whorouly. We never saw much of Dad as he only came home for a day or so every week or two.

As we lived only 5 or 6 miles from the camp, Dad would sometimes strip down to his shorts and singlet & jog home. I can remember some of the kids' mums saying, "Who

does he think he is?" That was the first time I had heard of the "tall poppy syndrome," although I didn't understand it at the time. I was just proud of my Dad.

Another time I was walking alongside Dad; I think it may have been in Melbourne, when two soldiers came to a 'crash halt' and saluted Dad as we passed, I felt pride even in those early years.

ALBURY

When Dad was discharged in 1945 we came to Albury to attend the Albury High School. Dad worked for the Dept of Supply and Shipping as an inspector of dangerous cargoes, supervising the transshipment of ammunition between NSW and Victorian railways.

Dad retired in 1956 & Dad and Mum ran a corner store on the corner of Swift and David Streets, Albury for several years. I got my first feel of army life when I did National Service training at Puckapunyal. The army was not for me.

I married Mary Britt in 1959 and we had three beautiful children who are all married and have children of their own and we are still all together-which is great. They are all very proud of their Grandfather and Great Grandfather.

FAMILY TRAGEDIES

The first tragedy in our family occurred when my eldest brother, Mervyn was killed when a primary glider he was flying crashed at the Albury aerodrome in 1954.

My next eldest brother, Max -a real outdoor type and a bit of a loner, did what our father had done some 40

years before and went to the N.T. He worked near Nourlangie Rock with a guy named Doug Muir at "Darwin Safaris". Doug flew a plane and would fly tourists out from Darwin and Max would take them crocodile hunting, shooting buffalo and fishing for barramundi in the area that is now known as Kakadu.

Muirella Park" a camping ground, where the air strip was, a few miles south of Nourlangie was named after Doug Muir and Max Borella,

My youngest brother, Neville who had worked with me at Mates Timber Yard as a joiner decided to join Max in the N.T. after he had finished his apprenticeship. However when they banned the shooting of crocodiles and culled the water buffalo, the camp disbanded. Max joined B.P. and worked at Darwin Airport refuelling planes and Neville took work at saw mill on the Daly River. The second family tragedy occurred in 1960 when Neville was drowned whilst shooting ducks in a lagoon about 80 km south west of Pine Creek.

As Dad had died in 1968, my mother in 1975 and Max from a heart attack in 1999, I am the only surviving member of the family.

TRAVELLING

In 1994 Mary and I had an opportunity to go overseas on a cricket tour of England with the "Golden Oldies" (not the Aust Test team). After the tour of England, we spent two weeks travelling through Europe. We took a side trip to Amiens then to Villers-Bretonneux where the mayor gave us afternoon tea then took us across the road to the school and upstairs to a mu-

seum in a large attic. I was surprised to see a photo of my father along with another VC winner who won his medal during the nine months that Aussies had defended and saved their little village (3,500 pop). The museum curator took us out to Monument Farm and we stood in almost the exact spot where Dad had won his VC It was very peaceful and much different from what it would have been some 76 years before.

When Mary and I retired in 2002, we took another trip that we had planned for years. With a Land-cruiser and caravan, we travelled up through the centre of Australia camping of course at "Muirella Park" named after brother Max and his partner in the safari business; visiting Daly Crossing and actually finding some old corrugated iron and an old cast iron boiler that marked the site of my father's Daly River farm; and finally the Benning Water Holes where brother Neville had drowned. This brought a closure to a lot of unanswered questions in our lives.

[This has been edited for publication. The full text is to be placed in the History Room at Albury Library.]

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ANSWERS TO QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Who were the tailors who had a business in Albury?

There were many, so listed are some in business around 1900.

R Abrahams (Albury Tailoring Co.) Est c. 1884 and by 1895 was employing 22 in the busy season. He had two-storey premises more than 100ft deep with a 25ft front-

age to Dean Street, employed travellers and serviced clients as far away as Sydney. In 1901 he operated from William St., Sydney, late Albury and Melb.

M Justice tailor, clothier etc, Dean St; opp Day's Commercial Buildings. He started the business in Albury c. 1860 and in 1895 employed 20 hands (no females). The premises were two-storey, 30ft by 165ft. Mr Alexander Justice was taken into the partnership in 1893 and by 1901 seems to have taken over the business.

John Thomas was not only 'My Hatter' but also 'My Tailor' and 'My Mercer.' He came to Albury in 1884, opening his own business in 1893. It was known as "The Strand" opposite Dean Square (NSW State Offices Dean St.) when he sold it in 1905.

Turnbull & Shortal, Townsend St; employed 17 hands in 1895 with the business extending to a 100 mile radius

of Albury. The premises were 20ft by 165ft. Mr J D Turnbull negotiated the travelling for the firm while Mr W Shortal had charge of the cutting dept. By Nov 1896 they had moved to Dean Street. In 1901 the partnership was Nolan & Turnbull.

W Low & W Small. The

Dear Charley,—

I AM not surprised to hear that you have sent your Watch to the Blacksmith for repairs.

That's just the new order of things. When we require a Wooden Leg now-a-days we don't go to an Expert in the Manufacture of Limbs. We generally send to the nearest Saw Mill.

Then, again, if Nature has been overkind to us, and we have outgrown the Waistband of our Trousers, we would never think of consulting an Expert in the Art of Massage. We generally open up negotiations with a Boiling Down Works. It's the same in the Tailoring Line.

Many people consider that they can get the best Suit at the nearest ham and beef shop, advertising **Suits Made to Order.**

But they can't, Charley!

Saw Mills can't make wooden legs, any more than blacksmiths can repair watches.

The moral in this story, Charley, is—

Go to the Man who has spent the whole of his life in trying to become an Expert in his particular line.

Yours truly,

W M. H. ASHBY,
Fashionable Tailor,
Dean Street, Albury.

From the soon to be published *Extracts from the 1907 Wodonga & Towong Sentinel* produced by the Wodonga Historical Society.

original firm commenced in 1906. Five years later Small took over the business and operated from 596 Dean St. under the name of W Small & Son. Low operated independently from 606 Dean St.

[There are many more names that we will record in the History Room]

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VICTORIA CROSS SHAVINGS

During an exchange visit to UK, 1960-62, Colonel Bob McLean visited the workshop where metal was being cut from a Crimean War cannon to make the medals. He gathered some metal shavings and brought them home. They are now in the AWM.

ADELYN CLOTHING FACTORY

Helen Pithie is researching Adelyn Clothing Factory and would value information, stories and/or photographs members might have.

Contact Helen 6051 3483 BH.

A&DHS Bulletin 465 PAGE 5

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INCORPORATED

Encourages the study of the history of the Albury district and of Australia through

- * Monthly Meetings—7.30pm, second Wednesday of each month February to December;
- * Monthly Bulletins—11 per year—reports, activities of the Society, research & liaison;
- * Tours—private and fund-raising—to sites and properties of historical interest; and
- * Research—Archives in the History Room at the Albury Library-Museum.

MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY ARE ENTITLED TO:

- * 10% discount on all items at the Museum shop.
- * The monthly Bulletin (not produced in January) posted or emailed.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION 1 June 07—31 May 08: INDIVIDUAL \$22;
FAMILY \$30
CORPORATE \$50

NEW LIBRARY/MUSEUM

Volunteer Register

Erika Balla-Harper, Education Officer at the Library/Museum plans to recruit Volunteers to train as Guides in the new Library / Museum.

Erika has developed a Volunteer Register for interested people to enter their names. It is anticipated that a Guide would work 3 hours on a proposed roster.

For those who register, training sessions are planned for:

July 10 10.30am-12.30pm OR 5.30-7.30pm

July 17 10am-12.30pm OR 5.00-7.30pm

July 24 10am-12.30pm OR 5.00-7.30pm

Volunteers can take one of two roles for the first month after opening. One is a Tour Guide the other role is Exhibition Guide.

Both roles provide information, interpretation and by being present, act as gentle security.

It is anticipated that a guide would take 1-2 tours lasting 10-15 minutes. A tour could be longer if pre arranged and by agreement.

For further information please contact Erika Balla-Harper, Learning and Outreach Coordinator or Sharon Groch, Learning and Outreach Officer on tel. 02 60513470

BASE HOSPITAL ARCHIVES

The archive team had its first outing on Monday 18 June. In a room we shared with cleaning equipment and bins we un-

packed 14 boxes of memorabilia, listed the intriguing items and repacked them. First indications are this is a job worth doing and Hospital staff are most supportive of the project.

A photo of the Board in the Centenary Year, 1960, alerted us to the fact that the hospital will celebrate its 150 years in 2010. It is truly one of Albury's oldest institutions.

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE JOURNALS

by John Craig

Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) Journal, June 2007.

- 1. Fascism in pre-WWII Italian population of Qld.
- 2. An analytical approach to events at Risdon Grove (Tas) 3 May 1804.

Links "N" Chains: Liverpool GS Journal, May 2007.

- 1. Origin of the 31 suburbs of Liverpool.
- 2. The voyage of Arthur and Barry Cleveland 1867 (cont).

Borderline News: Wodonga FHS Newsletter, May 2007.

- 1. At AGM 17 July 2007, Presentation by Ann Burrows on Helen MacPherson-Smith Genealogy Centre.

The Argyle Bulletin: Goulburn HS & FHS Journal, May 2007.

- 1. The Woodhouselee Church Ball: a poem by William Everitt Bolton (1890-1931).

Wagga Wagga Historical Society Newsletter, April/May 2007.

- 1. L A Fosbery: prominent public figure and local government

administrator of Wagga 1841-1923.

Heritage: Heritage Office of NSW Magazine, Autumn 2007.

- 1. *Denbigh* at Cobbity built by Charles Hook 1818, listed State heritage.
- 2. The last midget sub, Questions posed: Final action of the crew? Condition of sub? What happened?

HAROLD MAIR BRIDGE

Congratulations to our esteemed Patron upon the decision of Albury Council to name the 134 metre cable footbridge at the eastern end of Dean Street in his honour.

Harold was born in Albury, the son of a railwayman; worked as an apprentice printer and studied at the Railway Institute prior the WWII. He served in the South-West Pacific and later with the occupation forces in Japan.

Harold Mair was mayor of Albury 1976-1977, and member for Albury in the NSW House of Representatives from 1978 to 1988.

Harold qualified as an accountant and worked in business in Albury till his retirement. He now lives in Howlong and is studying for an Arts Degree at CSU.

A&DHS Bulletin 465 PAGE 6

MEMBERSHIP NEW/RENEWAL

INDIVIDUAL \$22 FAMILY \$30 CORPORATE \$50

NAME (Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss)

POSTAL ADDRESS:

(IF CHANGED)

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May we Email the *Bulletin* (File Size < 1MB) to you? If yes:

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(Only if new or changed)

