



# ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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## REPORT ON THE NOVEMBER MEETING (14/11/07)

The November meeting was varied and entertaining. Guest speaker Lillian Coleman focussed on the more recent history of St Matthews Anglican Parish, 1950 to the present, and Harry Leggatt was able to add an insight into the problems faced in obtaining building stone to match the old building. Jan Hunter delivered snippets about the Albury Show Society, recognising its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. The mystery item, a surveyor's chain, brought along by Michael Browne, sparked discussion about surveying and the intricacies and logic of the imperial system of measure including links, chains, furlongs, roods, poles & perches, acres and square miles all based on the chain of 100 links, or 22 yards. Melbourne visitor, David Eggers, contributed details of the visit to the border of the *Spirit of Progress* train on 25

November. The event is to celebrate the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the introduction of the elegant high-speed train. Geoff Hamilton drew our attention to the first meeting of the Albury & District Historical Society on 8 November 1960. Bill Bloomfield was President, Miss C Lyford Secretary and Basil Patman Bulletin Editor.

A laptop computer was set up to show the DVD of bridal parties at St Matthews from 1899 to the present. The DVD entitled *Gowns of Yesteryear* was a project of St Matthews Evening Group who have given a copy to the Society.

### NEW BOOKS ON ALBURY HISTORY

Congratulations to our two authors, Joe Wooding and Jan Hunter. Joe's history of 150 years of cricket on the border, *150 Not Out*, was launched by Albury, NSW and Australian player Steve Rixon at Albury

## NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY  
12 DECEMBER 2007  
7.30pm at Commercial Club  
Albury  
Business Meeting and traditional Bring, Show & Tell Evening.

**Christmas Dinner Friday 14 December 6.30 for 7.00 meal at Commercial Club. \$28 per head. Please contact June Shanahan asap.**

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What was the livery of the Spirit of Progress, and why was it painted those colours?

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## ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

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### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$22  
Family: \$30  
Corporate: \$50

**History Meetings:** 2nd Wednesday of the month 7.30pm at Commercial Club Albury.  
Committee meets 3rd Wednesday of the month 5.15pm at Albury Library|Museum.

A&DHS website:  
[www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/librarymuseum/research](http://www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/librarymuseum/research)

Library/Museum on 21 November. Jan's history of Central North Albury 1920-1950, *Building the Neighbourhood*, was launched by a former North Albury resident Harold Mair OAM on 2 December. Albury history is richer through the efforts of these authors and their supporters. Both books may be purchased from the respective authors.

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## **A HISTORY OF ST MATTHEWS ALBURY**

by Lillian Coleman

### **MY CONNECTIONS**

My family has quite a history with St Matthews Church.

In 1894 my grandparents travelled 80 miles from the Mitta to be married there.

I was married there in 1950; my daughters were baptised there, and the elder married there. My youngest daughter who lives in England wanted to be married in St Matthews, however between the time she booked the church and the wedding day – Fire!

So she married her Englishman in St Matthews-on-the-Square and later they returned from England to repeat their vows in the re-built church.

In March this year my granddaughter was married in St Matthews.

Father John Davis asked my husband and me to live in the Rectory while he was away in Germany. It was while we were living at the Rectory that my husband passed away.

I taught Sunday School with Miss Abbott in the old church Hall where the Courthouse stands today, before we moved to the new buildings of the Parish War Memorial Centre. The Centre has been a godsend to us over the years.

### **ST MATTHEWS EARLY DAYS**

The original Albury church

was built in 1859. Parish boundaries were from head of the Murray River to the South Australian border, and from the Murrumbidgee to Kilmore; population 3000. The church was very humble, made of stone with bricks for the aisle and calico for the windows and it was very damp. A Mr Binfield, the caretaker, received 15/- a week to clean the church twice a week; attend to the stoves during winter months, cut wood, fetch coke etc and keep stoves clean; ring bell and blow organ bellows at all church services on Sunday and week-days.

In 1862, the church closed for six-months. Rev Potter resigned because there was no money to pay him. Most of the men were away at the goldfields.

In 1890, several men including James Mitchell of Table Top, Mr Dight, Mr Griffith, Mr Edmonson, manager of Mate's were always giving not only of their time but their money to keep the church going. They asked the women if they could raise money.

In 1892, dampness in the building caused the organ to play up. Mr Sims, the organist, was requested to play only sacred music. In October next year he was suspended for one month because of his behaviour. (Did he like to swing the hymns a bit?) Dr Woods was appointed to play instead.

### **THE LAST HALF CENTURY**

Howard Jones, Ron Braddy and Gerry Curtis have recorded much of the history of the first century so I thought I'd tell something of the last fifty years.

In 1950, the tennis courts behind the church were a most popular place for family fun. Yvonne Jackson (Lester) told me about the parishioners building

the courts, digging and levelling the area, but she couldn't recall the year.

Archdeacon Ross Border organised the building of the St Matthews War Memorial Centre in 1960. The Centre was opened by His Grace Lord Bishop of Melbourne, the Most Reverend F Woods. Also in attendance were Archbishop George Hastings and the Rector The Venerable R Border.

In 1962, there was a fire in the vestry. Some documents were lost and record books badly scorched and water stained. The fire was caused by a man taking refuge there for the night and knocking over a candle. The church was not locked in those days.

The Retirement Village Stage 1 was approved by Albury Council in 1962. The area was 6½ acres between Garden and Dight Streets.

A copper spire on the church was dedicated in 1976.

In 1983, Reverend Robert Beal was consecrated to be Bishop of Wangaratta Diocese. Albury joined with Wangaratta Diocese in 1986 transferring from Goulburn Diocese.

In 1985, local boy, Father Charles Nagle celebrated 50 years in the ministry.



**China dish donated to the Society by Mrs Lillian Coleman. Dish made in Czechoslovakia and depicts the 'Soldiers Monument from Dean Street Albury NSW**

In 1988, an altar frontal was worked by 30 St Matthews women as a bi-centennial project. It was designed by Jan Joustra and took 11 months to complete.

#### **FIRE**

On 14 September 1991, St Matthews Church was destroyed by fire. The fire started near the organ on the ground floor and was caused by several surges of power. The congregation moved its services to the War Memorial Centre which they designated St Matthews-on-the-Square.

The Parish Council now had a mammoth task in front of them. A meeting of parishioners was held and several committees formed: stained glass and refurbishing, floor, stone and timber, the organ, money raising, historical. There were lots of frustrations and headaches, but the Parish Council was determined to return St Matthews to its former glory. Most parishioners wanted the church to be as it had been, only a few wanted a modern building. In 1992, Blessing of St Matthews reconstruction was held, and on 10 October 1993, the Foundation Stone was laid. The architect, Ian O'Connor of Melbourne was a very approachable person who listened to what we wanted. Albury builder AB & MA Chick was awarded the contract for the re-building.

We were blessed to purchase church furniture from the old cathedral in Bendigo. They had recently built a modern building and the furniture was not appropriate. The pulpit is made of Purbeck marble and had been a gift to Bendigo from Westminster Abbey in 1930. Choir stalls, a fine screen for the Lady Chapel, the reredos, prayer desks, credenza table, 4 pedestals and 2 hymn boards. We also received an altar that Gerry Curtis and helpers were able to make into altars for the Lady and St Francis Chapels, a brass lectern and font & canopy.

Christies valuation of our furnishings is five times what we paid for them.

#### **WINDOWS**

The East window is a copy of the original except for the top section. The top of the original was mostly stone with a few medallions of angel faces and made the church rather dark above the altar. Kevin Little, a great stained-glass artist brought his drawings to the glass committee to see what we all thought. By using stained glass in the top of the window we gained more light and a window of beauty. We were very fortunate to have such stained-glass professionals. Kevin Little also made the Rose window in the West wall. From the interior, it is partly covered by the organ. Albury Rotary contributed to the cost.

Kevin made and donated the Phoenix window that incorporates the only window to survive the fire, a small porch window. Kevin Little made the St Francis window in memory of the Norman and Bromfield families. It was sponsored by Luxon family.

The 3 windows of the last supper in the St Francis Chapel were made by Martin Van der Loom and are dedicated to the Ellis family and Rev and Mrs Ross Border. The 2/23<sup>rd</sup> Battalion window was donated by the Association members to replace their colours lost in the fire. Philip Handel used scenes from where the 2/23<sup>rd</sup> served. A gold cord from the colours was found in the ashes after the fire and was placed into the time capsule that is in the nave floor.

The organ was built in Le Tourneau in Canada. It was shipped out in pieces and reassembled on the floor of the church. It is now one of the best in Australia and we have visiting organists come to give recitals. *[Max Barry spoke about the organ in May 2005 see Bulletin 447]*

#### **BUILDING MATERIALS**

**Stone.** Stone for the rebuilding came from several sources. The window frames are Edna stone from Tasmania. Stone for the walls came from the foundations of the old gaol in Thurgoona. Street. *[See Harry Leggatt's comments on the sourcing of suitable stone.]*

**Timber.** Second hand oregon in sufficiently long lengths for the roof trusses was obtained from the Massey Harris Centre at Healesville. New pews were made at Wangaratta from timber obtained from the Mitta area. Timber lining for the ceiling came from Stows Albury.

**Tiles.** Slate tiles for the roof came from Spain, 25,000 of them. Slaters came from Melbourne. Floor tiles were supplied and laid by John Gayfer of Belbridge and the altar rails made by Rene Hampel.

**Column moulds.** Picton Hopkins made plastic moulds for the pillars using photographs of the originals.

**Spire.** The spire is sheeted in hand-crafted copper tiles. On the side facing Kiewa Street, each tile carries the name of a tradesman who worked on the project.

**Kneelers.** Jean Lindner and Fay Dreher designed hundreds of kneelers and organised the parish ladies to help make them. Included is a lovely one for the bridal couple to kneel on.

We had offers of beautiful cloths from the Catholic ladies and so much help from the people of Albury and district. It was great to see how united it made us. We will always be grateful.

On 21 September 1994, the finished church was consecrated.

## RECENT EVENTS

We have many groups for our church life: children's church, Mothers' union, Men's movement, Evening group, Embroidery group and St Matthews fellowship group. The Choir has some lovely voices. Jenny Prince went to London this year for exams and returned with high marks and a gold medal.

Times have changed in Albury. In 1915-1920 there were 120-150 children in the Sunday School taught by Miss Abbott, Miss Thornton and Ken Webb. In one year, 105 young people were confirmed.

2002 First Field of Remembrance ceremony at the war memorial behind the church was held and is now a yearly event.

2004 Tenth anniversary of the consecration of St Matthews Church.

On 2 May 2005, Sr Libby Gilchrist, the first woman priest in the Albury area, was ordained in St Pauls Cathedral Melbourne.

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## SOURCING THE STONE

Harry Leggatt reminded us of the difficulty in getting stone to match the various buildings making up St Matthews. Stone to match the 1874 church is Rocky Hill Granite quarried from Rocky Hill north of Albury.

The 1857 church was built of Albury Gneiss from the disused quarry on Padman Drive. A supply of this stone was 'robbed out' from foundation walls of the old Albury Gaol in Thurgoona Street.

John Craig said the old workings together with an old underground tank or well were discovered when excavation was being done for the St Matthews Retirement Village in Cahill Place.

[ For other information about the stone and the re-building see Bulletin 331 October 1994.]

## 100 YEARS AGO ST JOHN'S AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION

(Albury Banner 8 July 1907)

A largely attended meeting under the auspices of the recently formed

Albury branch of this Association was held at the Council Chamber on Friday night last, the Mayor (Ald Waugh) presiding. The following committee was appointed: Messrs HC Langley, WG Henderson and JER Fellowes. The secretary (Mr F Shepard) said the branch at present had 31 male and 19 female members. Dr W Cleaver Woods was elected lecturer to the gentlemen's class, and Dr A Andrews to the ladies' class. ... The secretary referred to the presence of Mr JS Shuter of *Drumwood* who had come 30 miles to attend the meeting. A vote of thanks was afforded Mr Shuter for his interest in the Association. In responding Mr Shuter said he had seen accidents in shearing sheds and other places out in the country, and appreciated to the fullest extent the desirability of disseminating knowledge regarding first aid.

## DOCUMENT PRESERVATION

Brief notes from a seminar held at Yackandandah 20 November.

**Threats to photos/documents:** dirt, oil (from hands), light, humidity, dampness (mould), sticky tape, glue and poor storage including pvc sleeves.

**Aids to preservation:** respect integrity (don't destroy the article's own story), handle as little as possible (clean sparingly with soft brush), make copy for general use, mark with soft pencil (2B), store in polypropylene or polyethylene sleeves (will be marked on box), or mount using photo-corners. Don't laminate.

## SPIRIT OF PROGRESS

At 1.15pm Sunday 25 November 2007, the famous 'Blue Train' glided to a halt at Albury Railway Station. The train, now operated by the Seymour Railway Heritage Centre (SRHC), visited Albury to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the introduction of the Spirit of Progress to the Melbourne—Albury run in 1937. The journey took 3½ hours each way and ran two return journeys daily.

The Spirit of Progress was replaced by the Southern Aurora in 1962 when the standard gauge line was completed linking Sydney with Melbourne.

This train has been painstakingly

## *A treasury of Albury's history*

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restored by volunteers belonging to the SRHC. The volunteers in smart uniforms with epaulets marked 'Train Manager,' 'Customer Attendant' and 'Train Officer,' manned the train for an excursion for border residents to Wodonga and return. Patronage was good. Train enthusiasts occupied vantage points beside the track to photograph the historic train on what might be its last visit to Albury. When the Wodonga rail bypass is carried out, the broad gauge line might not extend to Albury.

## MEMBERSHIP

Additions to our membership:  
B & M Pennay, R Symes, R Paech, P Palffy, J Whitla.

## JOURNEYING THROUGH THE JOURNALS

by John Craig

*Murrumbidgee Ancestor: Wagga FHS Journal*, October 2007.

1. Land records: Getting around technology.

2. Family History Seminar 3.5.08  
*Wagga Wagga HS Newsletter*, Oct/Nov 07

1. The Copelands Store of Wagga story from 1872 to the year of 1953 when it was taken over by David Jones.

*Heritage: Heritage Office of NSW Magazine*, Spring 2007.

1. Secrets of Joinery: Progressing of moulding profiles 1810-1915.

2. Heritage grants for 2008/2009 program funding now available.

*Military Historical Society (Albury-Wodonga Branch) Newsletter* No 5/2007.

1. Light Horse Museum Nth Bandiana preserves history of Light Horse and Armour in district, also Albury Battery.

Jan Hunter's talk on Snippets of the Albury Show Society's 150 year history will be in the next *Bulletin*.