



ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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FEBRUARY 2008

476

REPORT ON THE DECEMBER MEETING (12/12/07)

Attendance was our usual 20 +. Regulars unable to attend were replaced by guests.

Once again members brought an eclectic selection of items to show and tell about.

Joe Wooding had a photocopy of the Deed for the purchase of 640 acres the Murray Valley Vineyard acquired for the sum of 640 pounds sterling, dated 13th July 1860. The Deed gives precise survey details of the land.

[Does anyone know when Australian pounds replaced sterling in Australian commerce?]

Shirley Monte, who had seen advertisements for Dr. Sheldon's Gin Pills in early newspapers, showed a bottle that held this ancient medicine. She found the bottle recently while fossicking at Hume Weir while the water was at 2%.

Jan Hunter had two items: a metal box of matches from the 1934 Boy Scout Jamboree in Melbourne; and a record cleaner pad put out by "Blakes Busy Book Bazaar". The pad came from Leighton Passant.

Doug Hunter announced that the WWI Honour Board from the former Methodist Church, now part of the Police Complex, has been moved to St. Davids Uniting Church, where it joins the WWI Honour Boards from the Presbyterian and Congregational Churches.

Chris McQuellin who is researching burials in War Graves in France, was able to show a 'Google' map of Bullecourt, (France) with the location of his relative's burial place, clearly marked.

Roma Freeman brought a framed 1916 calendar put out by GW Griffith, a merchant

NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY

13 FEBRUARY 2008

7.30pm at Commercial
Club

Albury

Speaker: Warwick Jones:
"History of A T Jones."

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Is Elizabeth II the longest reigning, the oldest reigning, & was she the youngest reigning British monarch?

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ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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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

of Walla Walla and Manildra (30k east of Orange). The calendar featured the British War Cabinet.

Paul Waterstreet, whose family were licencees of both "Brady's" and "Waterstreets" Hotels around 1900, showed photographs of those Hotels at that time.

Noelle Oke, Honourary Archivist for The Scots School Albury, spoke briefly about her work and the continuing need for assistance in filling the gaps.

June Shanahan showed a ceramic teapot her uncle brought back from the 1914-1918 War. It is decorated with desert scenes.

Catherine Browne is a collector of Dolls Houses and showed a 1/144th scale model, and also a varied collection of antique furniture and fittings for the doll's houses.

Doug Hunter showed a photograph of Matron McAlister (1890-1987) and gave a résumé of her army service in both World Wars and her time as matron at Albury Base Hospital. (See article on page 4)

ANSWER TO QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What was the livery of the Spirit of Progress, and why was it painted those colours?
Answer: Blue and gold.

Michael Browne provided an answer to the second part of the question on the origin of the colours. In 1937, the Victorian Railways Commissioner Harold Clapp selected the colours based on the US Erie Railway livery. Both the engines and the all-steel carriages carried the colour



Spirit of Progress at Albury Railway Station
25 November 2007. Train is now maintained and operated by Seymour Railway Heritage Centre

scheme for the next forty years. Albury Library Museum has on display a magnificent poster showing the train in all its glory.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE 150 ANNIVERSARY OF THE ALBURY SHOW SOCIETY.

by Jan Hunter

[This talk was given at the November Meeting]

In 1857, forty people attended a meeting in Albury called by Robert Brown.. From that meeting, 150 yrs ago, the Albury and Murray River Agricultural and Horticultural Society was born. Almost immediately the Society held a Show in which 'fine peaches, grapes, quinces and maize were shown.' The wheat exhibited however was only 'tolerable'. As part of that Show, a ploughing match between a three-horse team and a two-bullock team was staged. Later in that year a stock exhibition was held.

A Showground site was chosen in Wodonga in 1860. This was fenced and the fifth annual Show was held. The fruit and vegetables were displayed next door in McKay's Victoria Hotel in their large upper room. After this effort, the Society collapsed and the

next Show was held six years later on 'Hospital Hill' in Thurgoona Street, Albury.

About this time the Society dropped the term 'Murray River' and became Albury and Border Pastoral, Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

The Society struggled till 1875 when a new committee was elected. Three thousand people attended the Show in 1876 which was held in the Gaol Gardens with the jumping being held on the Botanical Reserve.

In 1878 another site was chosen in Hume Street, but a five-acre site at Alexandra Park on the north-east corner of Guinea and Young Streets became available and that land became the Showgrounds till after WWII. The first Show on the new site was in 1879 in conjunction with the Albury Industrial Exhibition adjacent to the Mechanics Institute. This exhibition was run by the Show Society. A side light to that exhibition is that Alf Waugh a local butcher, attended and as a result, purchased a generator to run a refrigerator at his shop. He was the first butcher to use cold storage in Albury.

Another six acres was purchased on the Young Street site in 1884 and a very substantial grandstand was erected (to which there was much opposition but I don't know why). The stand held 600 people. That year the Show had an attendance of 7000. Another grandstand was built in 1904 which was

even bigger. Before the turn of the century the Showgrounds also had a cycling track and 'facilities for all types of sport'. The Show had become a significant event in the life of the wider district, an example being that Yackandandah Shire declared a public holiday on the middle day of the Show and Messrs Crawford and Co (successors to Cobb and Co) organised a drag to leave Yackandandah in the morning of the holiday.

As we straddle the turn of the century in the Society's history, it is interesting to note that a 1918 headstone, in the Albury Pioneer Cemetery, in memory of Walter Isaac Johnson, is inscribed, 'for twenty years secretary of the Albury & Border Agricultural Society.'

In the 1920s, part of the Showgrounds was leased to the Albury Motor Cycle Club, which had a cinder track there, similar to the Speedway Royal, Sydney. In 1928 a working bee added a safety strip to prevent riders from hitting the fence. A newspaper reported:

Racing on a cinder track is most spectacular, and although spills do occur, usually the rider comes to earth gently, and suffers no injury.

In the early twenties Albury's name went round the world when 'Sundown', a horse owned by A T Judd of Blayney cleared a world record jump at the Albury Show. This caused a sensation. In 1925 the same horse, competing again, dropped dead while trying for a 3rd attempt at a jump. One newspaper account recorded that there was a shocked silence,

and then people moved onto the ground to pluck tail hairs from the dead horse for a memento. Mr F C Blacklock lent his Fordson tractor to drag the animal from the ground so that the events could continue. The family say that 'Sundown' was buried where it fell, which is probably now under the principal's residence at The Scots School.

A successful Show is dependent on the weather but there were other difficulties over the years.

A very early Show had to be postponed for two days because of the death of the first president.

One year (1860) the Society had to issue medals instead of prize money and there was only one sheep exhibited.

1869 was a depression year. In 1889 floods prevented people crossing the river.

In 1892 depression forced the Society to reduce prize money from £1400 to £500 and the committee had to personally guarantee the overdraft.

The 1930s depression affected interest and attendance, but as the effects weakened the Society spread its wings again. A special train was run from Wangaratta for patrons of the Show in 1935 and the Belbridge Memorial Gates were erected at the Young Street entrance. Frederick John Belbridge was a member of the Society for 27 years and president six times.

In the next year, Society members discussed the purchase of a larger site to cope with increased attendance and exhibits. The proposed land was on Mate Street, between North and Fallon Streets and owned by Mr Stewart and the

Education Department but the committee were uneasy about committing themselves to buying land without knowing if they could sell the existing site. In the ensuing discussion it was noted that the Industrial Hall in the Showgrounds was used as a skating rink and had returned a profit of £185 for the year. By the end of 1938, the new site of nearly 15 ha had been purchased.

Meanwhile, back in September 1937, with plans for the Show completed, a polio scare blocked travel between NSW and Victoria. Children under 16 were not allowed to cross the border without a permit stating that the holder had not been in contact with the disease in the past fortnight. The permit was to be signed by a doctor or other designated resident. An urgent letter was sent to the *Border Morning Mail* from the president encouraging residents to get the required documentation. In the same paper were large advertisements with Show-train timetables from Wangaratta and Junee to Albury. Unfortunately there was a drop in attendance because of 'too many formalities' and general unease about the illness. The gate-takings were £150 down on the previous year.

The war was suddenly close to home when a temporary military centre was established at the Showgrounds. In June 1940, two contingents of 400 soldiers were billeted, and at its peak the ground held 1000 men. These became Albury's Own, 2/23rd, and at first the men were housed in the cattle stalls and

yards. When soldiers were later transferred to Bonegilla and Bandiana, the Friendly Aliens (4th Employment Company) took their place at the Showgrounds.

It was not surprising that the 1940 Albury Show was abandoned, but in July 1941 the military authorities gave notice of vacating the Showgrounds, leaving everything but the officers' mess, the guard house and the cook house for the Albury Show Society. They also gave £400 towards returning the ground to its former use. The Society discussed whether they should hold a Show that year, in view of the war situation, but they decided to go ahead with a three-day event in September. Their decision was a wise one, with the 1941 Show an 'outstanding success'

The Society was fully prepared, in view of the severe petrol rationing, for a falling off in the attendance figures, but these were well up to those of former years. Indeed, there were larger crowds present than at the last Show, held in 1939, when the shadow of war first fell across the world.

At this time the committee added their voice to others in Albury to suggest that the government purchase the land for a munitions factory. Late in 1941 a munitions annexe was established at the southern end of the Showgrounds. This annexe was not a long-lived enterprise and began discharging workers in 1943. The next year Gadsdens took over the premises, manufacturing cans, etc. from tin plate

By 1942 the Show Society buildings had been successfully re-located to Mate Street. A Show was held there in October and the *Border Morning Mail* commended the 'Carry On' attitude of the community. 'The Showgrounds were new' said

the *Border*, 'but the spirit was old.' The Society showed 'courage and initiative'. The report continued: "...the impact of war upon Albury's first Show on its new ground yesterday was inescapable. One felt it everywhere in the half-completed grounds (grandstand and a host of other facilities have yet to come), fall off in side-shows and, above all, in the absence of at least two major attractions, the cattle and sheep sections."

No doubt the Show Committee members were relieved when the Presbyterian Church, owners of the Albury Grammar School, purchased the old Showgrounds in 1944. The school paid £8500 for the 5.6ha between Young and Perry Streets. The Belbridge Memorial Gates were shifted to the Mate Street entrance of the new Showgrounds, facing Stephen Street and they are still standing today.

Apart from the annual Shows the actual Showgrounds have been a useful public space. In the early years of the century the militia had weekend camps on the grounds. In 1920 Captain Roy King landed on the oval by mistake, despite a smoke fire on Alexandra Park where he was supposed to land. In 1924, 1500 school children made the phrase, 'Hume and Hovell 1824-1924'. When the Duke of Gloucester visited in 1934, his party were welcomed at the Showgrounds and he inspected the buildings.

The Albury Show Society is one of the oldest organisations in Albury and it appears that the only formal history of the Show Society is a paper on the first fifty years written by Dr Arthur Andrews in the early 1900s. It sounds as if there is a job here



Matron Charlotte Joan McAllister at Albury Base Hospital c. 1946

for an historian, wouldn't you say?

CHARLOTTE JOAN MCALLISTER MID MBE

19 January 1890 – 31 March 1987

Charlotte McAllister is best known in Albury because of her time as Matron of the Albury District and later Albury Base Hospital. Less well known is her service as Matron of Heidelberg Military Hospital during WWII and completely unknown is her WWI service with the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) in India.

Charlotte Joan McAllister was born in Footscray 19 January 1890. She trained as a nurse and, in 1916 at the age of 26, enlisted as a Staff Nurse in the AANS, volunteering for overseas service with the Indian Nursing Service. On 26 December 1916 she embarked at Melbourne on RMS *Mooltan* bound for India. She disembarked at Bombay on 15 January 1917 and commenced duty at Victoria War Hospital.

On 16 May 1917, she was transferred to Waziristan Field Force, North West Frontier, where she served for seven

CHARLOTTE McALLISTER
SCHOOL OF NURSING

MATRON

1. 11. 34 TO 14. 11. 40

1. 4. 46 TO 4. 2. 58

DEDICATED 7. 10. 77

Plaque in Albury Base Hospital Historical Collection

months. She was awarded a Mentioned in Despatches (MID) for her service on the North West Frontier. In December 1917, she was transferred to the 34th Welsh General Hospital at Deolali. During her time at 34th WGH the unfortunate 'Deolali Affair' occurred, that for the AANS nurses, soured their time in India.

Immediately following the Armistice, Staff Nurse McAllister was transferred to England where she served briefly at 3rd Australian Auxiliary Hospital (3 AAH) Dartford. On 28 February 1919 she returned to Australia on HMAT *Anchises* and was discharged in Melbourne on 14 June. She was awarded the British War Medal (BWM) but not the Victory Medal. Her MID was queried by AIF Headquarters, but subsequently confirmed as having been gazetted in the London Gazette 18 May 1918. A letter from AIF Base Records 3 October 1923 noted the certificate for MID had been received from Secretary for State for India and had been forwarded to former Staff Nurse C J McAllister. Upon her enlistment in 1940, an enquiry was made as to what service ribbons she was entitled to wear and was informed the BWM. There was no mention of the MID.

Charlotte McAllister was appointed Matron at Albury District Hospital on 1 November 1934 and held the position for six years. On 2 December 1940, she enlisted in the AANS and was posted to the newly established 115th Australian General Hospital (115 AGH) at Heidel-

berg on the outskirts of Melbourne. Her army number was V9514.

At the time of her departure, the local sub-branch of the RSSILA

(forerunner of the RSL) presented

Matron McAllister with a small bluish-grey travelling case with an inscribed brass plate attached. The case is now in the Albury LibraryMuseum.

In December 1942, she volunteered for overseas service and was allotted the number VX117200 with the rank of major. Illness, and in all probability her age (52), precluded her departure for overseas, so she continued as Matron of the redesignated 115th Heidelberg Military Hospital with the rank of lieutenant colonel until 26 April 1945 when she was placed on the Retired List (RL). She was awarded the War Medal and the Australian Service Medal.

A Heidelberg nurse, Wilma Young, remembered the early days when Matron McAllister was in charge. The hospital was being built and only 12 nurses were on the staff. The first patients were sick and injured from Army units training in Australia. Then the first wounded from the Middle East arrived. Of Matron McAllister she said: "O well she had been in the First World War I think. She was very stern and a disciplinarian really, but she was very fair."

Charlotte McAllister resumed duty as Matron of Albury Base Hospital on 1 April 1946. She was made a Member of the British Empire (MBE) in 1954 for her services to nursing. She was the founder of the Albury Base Hospital Post Graduates' Association, and the Hospital's School of Nursing was named in her honour. She retired on 4 February 1958 and moved to Melbourne to care for her sister.

She was accorded a civic farewell by the City of Albury chaired by the mayor Ald CE Bunton at which civic and community dignitaries paid tribute to her contribution to Albury. Speakers included Mr D G Padman MLA, Archdeacon Hill, D G Armstrong Chamber of Commerce, Mrs E McDonald Red Cross, Sister Nordsvan Returned Nurses Assoc, Mrs G Coghlan RSL Women's Auxiliary, Mr R Vincent RSL, Mr R White Albury Football Club, Mrs A McBride Red Cross VADs, Miss M Roxborough on behalf of former staff, Mr LA Heath, and Mrs T McEachern (Sister Bell) one of the first trainee nurses.

Dr Webber presented Matron McAllister with a silver tea service on behalf of the honorary medical and dental staff and honorary physiotherapists.

The *Border Morning Mail* of 4 April 1987 carried a report of the death of Matron McAllister in Melbourne on 31 March. She was in her 98th year.

+ + +

GIFT OF DIARIES

Mr Tom Jelbart has given a collection of his father's diaries and notebooks to the A&DHS to be assessed and preserved where the Society deems suitable. Tom has relocated from his Riverwood Village unit to the Lutheran Hostel and no longer has space for the collection.

J E Jelbart was a pastoralist conducting a Polwarth stud at *Stony Park* a holding of 3000 acres at Jindera. His notebooks and diaries cover five decades from 1916 to 1960 and record the minutiae of farming life.

He was active in local and state government affairs. He

served as a councillor on Hume Shire Council for 37 years and was a member of the Country Party. Dr Bruce Pennay referred to the diaries in his 2007 book *Three Shires and their Councils*.

Tom has also given us a set of Albury Sheep Show and Fair programs.

The gifts are much appreciated.

ALD ALF 'WARF'

At a presentation function in relation to the safe landing of the KLM airliner *Uiver* at Albury, the Dutch Ambassador kept referring to Alderman Alf Waugh as Mr Warf. When it was pointed out to him that it was Mr 'War', he said, "No, if LAUGH is 'Laff' then WAUGH must surely be 'Warf!'" Hence Mr Warf it was.

50 YEARS AGO IN ALBURY

CANNED BEER

Beer in cans went on sale in Albury for the first time on 7 January 1958. Globe Hotel barman John Maguire said there was little difference in the taste of canned and bottled beer. Others saw advantages too: if dropped they sustained no damage, and the more dignified shape made them easier to smuggle past the disapproving eyes of neighbours. One drinker raised a problem: "How do we get rid of the empties? The bottle-o won't want them." (BMM 8/1/58)

REGISTRATION FOR NATIONAL SERVICE

An advertisement notified all 18 year old male British Subjects and New Australians whether naturalised or not, they must register by 10 March. Exemptions were certain diplomatic personnel, aboriginal natives of Australia and full-time serving members of the Perma-

NEW BOOKS ON ALBURY'S HISTORY

Recently published books by Society members have received a very positive response from readers.

150 Not Out 1858-2007: Cricket in Albury-Wodonga, by Joe Wooding (\$39 \$49 posted)

and

Building the Neighbourhood: Central North Albury 1920-1950, by Jan Hunter (\$30 \$37 posted)

Copies are available from the respective authors:

Joe Wooding Ph 02 6021 4887

Email: onefiftynotout@bigpond.com

Jan Hunter Ph 02 6021 2835

Email: djhjr@bigpond.com

nent Defence Forces. (BMM 1/3/58)

ROYAL VISITOR

In February 1958, the nation was agog with the visit of Queen Elizabeth, the Royal Mother. Albury was no exception. On 3 March, more than 50 women attended a Women's Liberal Club luncheon at the Globe Hotel and "heard such a graphic description by Mrs D E Fairbairn of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother's visit to Canberra that they almost felt they had been present themselves for the festivities and pageantry."

The day began with the presentation of Queen Elizabeth's banner to the Royal Military College, an investiture luncheon, a garden party and school visits in the afternoon, and finally a State Ball.

Mrs Fairbairn described the Queen Mothers dresses in great detail, especially her ball gown and jewellery. (BMM 4/3/58)

MEMBERSHIP LIST

Additions to the list:

Families of: R Harrison, P Waterstreet.

Single: D Bartsch

MARCH MEETING

A&DHS Meeting 12
March will be held at
Adamshurst
David Street.

7pm start.

Talk, Tour & Supper \$5
Guests welcome.

Numbers, with money, to
Jill Wooding or Helen
Livsey

APRIL MEETING

Plans are in hand for a Pioneer Cemetery Walk on the afternoon of Sunday 13 April to mark Heritage Week. This will replace our April evening meeting.

An invitation will be extended to the public. More information next

Bulletin