



# ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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AUGUST 2008

482

## REPORT ON THE JULY MEETING (9/7/08)

The night was dark and stormy, but a good number met in the Elizabeth Room at the Commercial Club for our July meeting.

Our scheduled speaker, Colin Laughton, was not able to attend owing to illness, so three of our members spoke. The short notice they received was not evident to the audience. Jan Hunter, Chris McQuellin and John Craig gave excellent presentations. We hope Colin will recover quickly and be able to speak to the Society at the August meeting.

The meeting opened with a resumption of the AGM to receive the audited accounts of the Society. The treasurer presented the report and it was received without question. A copy is attached to this Bulletin.

The Quiz, Up and Down Dean Street attracted answers

and snippets of additional information adding to our knowledge of the history of Albury's main street.

## MATE'S STAFF COMMUNIQUE'S

Extract from a talk by Jan Hunter  
World War 11 broke out in September 1939 and, in November of 1940, Mate's Staff Comforts Fund was formed, "to remind our fellow employees serving in the Forces that we, on the Home Front, want to give them a helping hand." A committee of seven was elected, including two women. The Comforts Fund sent hampers to their staff overseas once a fortnight, canteen orders and then began to send out a monthly newsletter, called, *Mate's Staff Communique, The Official Organ of Mate's Staff Comforts Fund*. The newsletter was compiled with the aid of the committee and the Display Department. They were printed on a Gestetner duplicator, collated and stapled by hand. Members of the Staff Comforts Fund

## NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY  
13 AUGUST 2008  
7.30pm at Commercial Club  
Albury

Speaker: Mr Colin Laughton on the topic: "The Laughton family business in Albury".

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Should the name of QEII Square be changed? If so, what would be a good name and why?

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## ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

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**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:** Catherine Browne, John Craig,  
Carole Whitbourn, Jill Wooding, Howard Jones  
and Ray Gear

**Journals & Stock:** John Craig  
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**Membership list & Bulletin dispatch:** Ray  
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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.alburyhistory.org.au](http://www.alburyhistory.org.au)



**Mate's Staff Roll of Honor  
World War II**

Currently in storage at the 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles Museum, North Bandiana awaiting a more appropriate place of display.

made a weekly donation. Young Doug Atchison, from the Electrical Department, collected the money after late night shopping on a Friday. When late night shopping ceased he collected in the mornings before things got busy.

When the first *Communiqué* was issued in February 1941 there were five Mate's men overseas; seven training in Australia; two awaiting calls by the RAAF and two listed under Home Defence. A special page for the Roll of Honor was added as more staff enlisted. The 'girls' are first mentioned in March 1941, in a paragraph. Three of them had qualified for the Voluntary Aid Detachment, another was, "passing by in the

heavenly blue of the Red Cross" and two sisters had, "tackled the task of driving army trucks and ambulances to join the St John's (sic) Ambulance Squad." In June 1941, the first woman joined the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF). In July 1942 a special page was added to the *Communiqué* - a 'Roll of Honor' for 'Women Members of the Staff who have joined the Services'. Six women are in the WAAAF And a Miss Hafner is now listed as Sgt Jessie Hafner. Two women are with the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS).

The first issue contains extracts from letters of enlisted men. Ted W had received his first hamper. Alan V in Palestine had received a promotion to gun-layer. "Good shooting, Alan," says the *Communiqué*. As time went on, local staff members wrote personal letters on behalf of everyone. The return letters were addressed, "Dear Roma" or "To the boys" or "Dear Sir", if it was a Head of Department. They always mentioned receiving the *Communiqué*. Many letters coming in began with 'I apologise for not writing sooner'. Letters and the *Communiqués* come and go from Malaya, Palestine, Rhodesia, Tobruk, Rabaul and also from Japan and Germany. One overseas letter, written in a dug-out, took four months to reach Albury. There are also bright

and cheery letters from Darwin and various cities or camps around Australia.

The contents of the newsletters followed a pattern. A sombre and inspiring editorial took the front page, then the Roll of Honor listing the staff in the forces; shop staff news; some amateur poetry (very amateur!) and letter extracts. Contributions were invited and 'if a bright paragraph produces a chuckle, then this Journal will have accomplished something, in a small degree, towards a final victory for the British Empire. GO TO IT!' said the editor. However another edition warns that only 'wholesome contributions' will be published.

In July 1941, a new symbol appeared on the Roll of Honor; that of 'Missing, Believed Prisoner of War.' The designation of POW continued until the end of the *Communiqués*. Bill Williams was captured at Tobruk and spent time in Italy and Germany in POW camps. He wrote regularly and received parcels and letters. His letter on being released is very moving. Lieutenant Clive Marshall was captured in Rabaul. He writes, "tell Mr Thompson [the boss] that I am putting in a lot of hard work - 'studies progressing satisfactorily, still in good fettle. No need for any worry, just keep smiling." A letter card from Marshall, written in April 1944, nine months later, "Imagine my feelings on receiving seventeen letters after two years silence. The sudden realisation that loved ones, home and happiness await my return was like waking from a nightmare. Great to know you are all carrying on so splendidly."

In April 1942 the *Communiqué* announced that Pilot-Officer Peter Thompson, in Timor, died through illness on active service. He was the only son of the Governing-Director of the firm; was one of the first members of Mate's Limited staff to join the

R.A.A.F., and the first to gain commissioned rank. There were no other deaths of Mate's staff.

"The Communiqués are a lifeline from home," a soldier writes "...have just finished reading it for the third time, you have no idea how great it is to receive news of old workmates...". Another says, "The faithful *Communiqués* are arriving regularly and are read from cover to cover, then put away very carefully to be read at a later date." Yet another says, "Am starving for news of you all. Suggest you type your letters as they are much easier to censor. The regular hampers are also greatly appreciated."

After one year of operating the Comforts Fund had sent 180 hampers and 164 Canteen Orders and continued to do so. They were gratefully received. "Thank you for the last Mate's Staff Comforts Fund parcel which arrived in A1 condition containing 'valuables' as we call them up here." "Thanks for another one of those super hampers...it will come in handy up here in the wilderness...The other two members of my crew thought that Christmas had come when I produced the tin of peaches."

We assume the last *Communiqué* was the combined issue of August/September 1945. It lists 59 men and 15 women either just discharged, or still on active service. Only one of the three Prisoners of War was home.

\* \* \*

There are four volumes of the *Communiqués* in our possession. Twelve issues are stapled together and bound in hard covers. Luck has played a part in their preservation. Mates was sold to Burns Philp & Co in 1946 and the store continued to function under a manager. However, when Mate's was sold to Waltons in 1976 the business was closed. One of the sales staff, thought to be Cliff Chamberlain, gathered up these copies

as he turned out the lights, so to speak. Fifty years later the copies were given to John Neale, another former staff member, who was attending a Mate's reunion. The copies were handed around, and became separated. It was by chance that I came across one copy. Realising their value we gathered them together but they only went as far as 1944. Helen Livsey holds another copy of one volume which she thinks came through Gerry Curtis. Wonderfully the final year has turned up. I passed on an account of an Air Training Corp camp in one of the volumes, to Chris McQuellin. He tracked down the author of the article, now in his eighties, Doug Atchison. He mentioned that he had all the newsletters in a box on top of his cupboard. Doug has donated them to the Society and we will copy the whole set onto a CD for public access.

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#### ANSWERS TO THE QUIZ

1. The Kiwi with the key is on the façade of Just Jeans, 492 Dean Street, It was NZ Insurance in 1971.
2. Clocks with no numerals are the CML and the clock above Thomas Jewellers.
3. The Peace Loan plaque is on the Art Gallery, the old Town Hall. The loan was oversubscribed and this might have been the reason for the plaque.
4. There are no fewer than 19 flagpoles in the block between Kiewa and Olive Streets.
5. Two snakes are carved on the western side of the Alfred Waugh Memorial on the Dean Street frontage of QEII Square.
6. There are 11 terracotta chimney pots on the Building occupied by Angus & Robertson. It was the ANZ Bank and before that the Union Bank.
7. "The Block" is spelled out in tiles at the entrance to Ritz Arcade beside the Commonwealth Bank at 482 Dean Street.
8. Chief Town Planner 1985-1992 Robert Harvey is remembered on a plaque on the shelter adjacent to the Art Gallery.
9. Mate's Building on the corner of Dean and Kiewa Streets has the inscription 'Established 1850'. The business did not operate from this site till 1900 however.
10. Corban Building 474 Dean Street, Farrah Building 472 Dean Street, and Abikhair Buildings 477-479 Dean Street are the three families.
11. The headless kangaroo is on the façade of Australia House 470 Dean Street. The name would suggest there might have been an emu as well at some time.

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**Alfred Waugh Memorial Fountain**  
Dean Street frontage of Queen Elizabeth II Square Dean Street Albury. Note snakes on either side of figure carved on fountain.

## RENAMING

### QUEEN ELIZABETH II SQUARE.

Albury City Council is toying with the idea of renaming the park in the centre of the city as part of the ongoing redevelopment of the area.

Arising out of the quiz above, Patricia Strachan recalled a speech by City Engineer Mr Jack Sarvaas, who said it should not be called Dean Square because it was not a square. Following the redevelopment in the 1960s the area was known as the Civic Centre. Patricia was also present when the mayor Ald John Roach announced the Centre would be known as Queen Elizabeth II Square to mark the visit of her majesty to Albury 5 May 1988. The public accepted the change, though many were reluctant, and immediately dubbed the area QEII Square.



### SYDNEY WORRALL SIMMONDS

No 12 Squadron Air Training Corps  
Extract from a talk by Chris  
McQuellin

Sydney Worrall Simmonds has the honour of being the first cadet of Albury's No 12 Squadron Air Training Corps (ATC) to graduate from the ATC and be accepted into the RAAF.

Worrall Simmonds was employed as a junior in the Rural Bank in Albury from March of 1941. His parents were living at Baranduda just out of Wodonga, so he boarded privately in Albury with the Ferguson family in Crisp Street. With the commencement of 12 Squadron ATC in early January of 1942, he attended cadet training in the evenings and at weekends. Like other cadets he had to do maths, trigonometry, aircraft recognition and drill practice. Cadet Simmonds received his Profi-

ciency Certificate on the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1942 from the mayor of Albury, Ald. D G Padman, at a presentation at the ATC Gala Ball.

"On the day that I turned 18, with my ATC proficiency certificate in my pocket, I presented myself to the RAAF recruiting depot. A month later on 14 August 1942, I began my initial training with the parent unit as an observer trainee. By April of the following year, I put up my observer's wing. Was I delighted! The following month I received promotion to the rank of Sergeant Navigator. I felt that the world was too small to hold me."

He related that he was first introduced to the Bristol Beaufort at the No 1 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Sale in Eastern Victoria. Worrall was eventually posted to No 100 Squadron, in Beaufort Bombers, as a navigator/bomb-aimer in the New Guinea theatre. He was initially at Goodenough Island in the Milne Bay District.

Although not taught to fly, the pilots gave the navigators enough flying time to cope in an emergency. In our conversation, Worrall recalled that he was glad he never had to carry out a landing by himself.

He remembers one flying incident, when his Bristol Beaufort aircraft crashed just after take-off on Ferguson Island. The plane had a crew of four, a full fuel load and a primed bomb load. Fortunately the bombs did not explode and the crew lived to tell the tale. Worrall Simmonds paid tribute to his English born pilot, Flying Officer (later Flight Lieutenant) Tony (real name Garrod) Treverton to whom he was 'forever grateful.'

Worrall Simmonds recalled other events: "The second operational night raid on Rabaul could have been my last. Caught in the radar controlled searchlights in Simpson Harbour, we used a lot of fuel getting out of them and

did not take a per point (departure point) for heading home. With bad weather on the way back, it was only extreme luck that allowed us a navigation fix on the New Guinea coast, through a break in the clouds. We landed with ten minutes of fuel left."

Following his tour of duty in New Guinea he was posted to Port Pirie South Australia as a navigation instructor. At the cessation of hostilities, Simmonds was posted to No 35 squadron (C47s) in Townsville. This included a stint flying to Japan in February of 1946, where he flew over Hiroshima. This must have been a very sobering journey because the area of utter devastation was still very evident at the time.

After being discharged, 'Wod' as he was known, returned to work at the Rural Bank in regional towns of NSW. He lived in retirement in North Sydney until his death earlier this month.

[Chris's history of No 12 Sqn ATC is expected to be published soon.]

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### BUNYABAGOOSE!

#### The Memoirs of Ned Monte.

Monte Publishing (2008)

In this book, just released, Albury identity Edward Rupert (Ned) Monte reflects on his early life. He begins with fond memories of his father William Monte who was a timber getter and champion axeman.

Ned tells of his childhood and schooling at Bonegilla. He earned much needed pocket money catching Murray Cod to sell at hotels and boarding houses; rabbits for their skins and also for the pot, and water rats. A large water rat skin sold for 2/3, as much as 3 rabbit skins.

Ned worked in the motor business in Albury before joining the Army in 1941. He was taken prisoner in Singapore and spent 3½ years working on the Burma Railway. Ned's account of these

years is 'matter-of-fact', but does not understate the awful conditions the POWs endured. He mentions many times the courage and risks taken to get additional items of food. He is generous in his acknowledgement of the help given by the local people in Thailand who traded food and medicines in spite of Japanese threats.

Before leaving Singapore, Ned located 16 Albury boys among the POWs. One of his sad tasks when he returned in 1946, was to visit families and recount how their sons died.

When Ned returned to Albury, his brother-in-law, Ern Bleasdale took him trout fishing for a week near Mitta Mitta. That week in the bush was the start of Ned's rehabilitation. However, the trauma of his years of captivity has never completely left him.

Ned's grandson Anthony has been largely responsible for the production of this fine little book. It is available from Yums Health Food Bar at 3 City Walk, Dean Street. Ph 02 6041 1929.

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**JOURNEYING THROUGH THE JOURNALS**

*Richmond River (Lismore) HS Bulletin*, June 2008.

◆ S T Sellwood & Sons and the Indian community.

*Insites: Historic Houses Trust of NSW Magazine*, June 2008.

◆ Building "Ships" that fly; the flying boats.

*History: RAHS Magazine*, June 2008.

◆ Shockwaves: a domestic servant's tale 1925

*Argyle Bulletin: Goulburn HS&FHS Journal*, April 2008.

◆ Sassafras Mountain: from the memoirs of James Henry Sturgiss (Pt 1)

*Links'n'Chains: Liverpool GS Journal*, May 2008.

◆ Mauritius: the isle of bouquets, buckets and buccaneers.

*RAHS Journal*, June 2008.

◆ Late 19th century German immigrant land and stock

holdings in the Southern Riverina.

◆ The looming battle: Our Lady of Fatima and public space in Cold War Queensland in the 1950s.

*The Stockman's Hall of Fame Newsletter*, June 2008.

◆ Tribute to "Smokey" Dawson.

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**ANOTHER TAILORESS AT MATE'S**

Jean Whitla advises that Mavis Chapple was another who worked as a tailoress/dressmaker at Mate's. She later established her own business in Wodonga.

\* \* \*

**ALBURY HOCKEY RINK**

Helen Livsey provided information that dated the "Rules of the Albury Rink" printed in Bulletin 481, to 1888/9.

D J Abercrombie was manager of the Commercial Bank. He left Albury in 1889. He was also involved in Albury's first military force, a voluntary reserve infantry corps.

In 1888, Dr Harvey Nickoll announced he had entered into partnership with Dr Andrews in Olive Street and had commenced practice. This suggests he had only recently arrived in Albury.

William J Jones was a builder and undertaker. He was mayor of Albury 1877-78 and an alderman for various periods till 1899. While mayor he planted the first tree in the Botanic Gardens.

The rink was above the Exchange Hotel stables, Smollett Street. The building is now the Green Court Flats.

Having established a date, the surprising thing is the expense of roller skating. A monthly ticket cost 12/6 which was a considerable amount of money in 1888. A workingman's wage was about £3 a week, so it might suggest skating was an elite pastime.

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**ANTIQUÉ VALUATION DAY**

The committee is currently making arrangements to have Ken Buxton, well known antiques and collectables presenter on radio 2UE, to come to Albury to participate in a Valuation Day at the Albury Library Museum on Saturday 6 September, 10 am to 4 pm. Members of the public, and hopefully members of the Society, will be able to bring in items to have them valued. More details next *Bulletin*.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

**MEMBERSHIP PROMOTION**

Are you available to help answer enquiries and hand out brochures at our stands at Centro Lavington and Centro Albury on Friday 12 September and Saturday 13 September?

A roster has been drawn up in hourly blocks to cover 9 am to 7 pm Friday and 9 am to 5 pm Saturday. Now we need names to complete the roster.

If you can help, please contact Jill Wooding 6021 4887.

This is a great opportunity to promote the Society and many hands will ease the burden. It's also quite enjoyable!

**GENTLE REMINDER**

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE**

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

THANK YOU