



# ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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## REPORT ON THE AUGUST MEETING (13/8/08)

The August meeting was a business meeting so began with the acceptance of the minutes of the previous business meeting 14 May 2008. The president reported that Margaret Royle has entered the written list of Albury Base Hospital historical collection on to a computer data base ready for the next phase of photographing the more important items.

The question of the month concerning the name of Queen Elizabeth II Square (QE2) was discussed. Many felt a return to Dean Square was more appropriate, although it might seem rude to change the name as it does commemorate the visit of the present monarch in 1988. It was pointed out QE2 is very easy to text on a mobile phone. A forward thinker foreshadowed Chas3 as a name. So if the Society is

ever asked, we could say if the name is to be changed, let it be Dean Square.

Colin Laughton was our guest, speaking about the foundry and engineering business conducted in Albury by four generations of the Laughton family. Geoff Hamilton rounded out the evening with a brief history on the beginnings of the Albury & District Historical Society 48 years ago.

Bruce Pennay described an opportunity for the Society to join with the Albury Library-Museum in applying for a grant from the Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) to conduct a project: "Drysdale's War-Time Albury." The project would study the effect of WWII on Albury viewed through the works of artist Russell Drysdale. A motion was carried that the Society should proceed with the application.

## NEXT MEETING WEDNESDAY

10 SEPTEMBER 2008  
7.30pm at Murray Gardens  
36 Mountford Crescent  
Albury

Speakers: Darren Wright : "Iraq experience";  
Carole Whitbourn: "...at the Library-Museum;" and  
Howard Jones: "Border Mail".

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What is the meaning of Mungabareena, and what is its significance to the history of Albury?

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## ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

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

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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)

Administrative matters were discussed relating to the Information Days to be held at Centro Albury and Lavington on Friday and Saturday 12 & 13 September, and also the Antique Valuation Day to be held at the Library-Museum on Saturday 13 September.

The meeting was reminded that the 10 September Meeting is to be at Murray Gardens.

### LAUGHTON FAMILY AND ITS BUSINESS

Talk by Colin Laughton

My family originally came from Wysbech near Peterborough in England. The surname suggests they were of Saxon descent.

Charles Laughton owned an inn, the Rose & Crown, which is still there today. In 1851, the family migrated to Australia, settling somewhere around Collingwood.

My great grandparents married in Colac then moved to Casterton in Western Victoria were my grandfather, John Palmer Laughton, was born in 1868. At this point they must have decided to move to Albury. They travelled by train to Echuca then by the paddle-steamer *Jane Eliza* to Albury. First they managed a property near Culcairn, but were driven off the land by several years of severe drought.

John Palmer Laughton was apprenticed at Lampitt's Foundry in South Albury. Serving his time, he moved on to other pursuits. Winning the ANA cornet title he became bandmaster at Albury and Rutherglen. In the paddock at his house in Townsend Street, he had a brickyard,

Whilst working at Hayes Flour Mill he was right in the middle of a boiler explosion losing three fingers off his right hand. Everybody thought that would be the end of his cornet playing career, but he soon



learned to play it left-handed. I suspect the brickyard and the band positions gave him enough money to buy the foundry from Lampitts in 1900.

My father, John Henry Laughton, was born in Albury in 1895 one of ten children, five of whom died in very early childhood. He was a very accomplished violinist, winning a conservatory scholarship, but his father would not let him go, and his work life started at the foundry when he was 12 years old.

I was born in Albury in 1935, the younger of two boys, educated at Albury Public and the Grammar School to matriculation level. I started work at the foundry in 1953 and studied accountancy and fitting & turning at Albury Tech. I did National Service in 1954. I met my wife Heidi in 1960 while skiing and we were married in 1963. We have two boys and two girls. The boys, Andrew and Craig served their apprenticeships with me then went back to school and university and then moved on to other pursuits.

### FOUNDING PROCESS

Founding is a process of producing castings, by pouring molten metal into a hollow mould usually made of sand bound together with moisture and clays or resins. It is still used extensively, although supplanted today by other methods, such as forging, extrusion, rolling and machining.

It involves three separate operations. First, a replica pattern of the finished object usually of wood or aluminium is made. A hollow mould is then made by packing sand around the pattern then carefully removing it. Then molten metal is poured into the mould. The moulds are usually prepared in flasks, made of metal or wood. The bottom box is called the drag the upper the cope.

Sand is used because it allows a certain amount of gas and va-



Laughton's factory at 436 Townsend Street Albury. When asked about the lack of signage, Colin said "we didn't need it."

pour to pass through it when the casting is poured.

This is a very basic description, as moulders use many variations and special techniques in jobbing founding.

The cast iron, composed mostly of scrap cast and pig iron (new material) is melted in a furnace called a cupola (basically a small blast furnace). The fuel is foundry coke made from anthracite coal; ours came from Kembla Coke and Coal. The materials are fed in layers, with limestone used as a catalyst to allow slag to move off freely. Air under pressure is blasted in by a roots blower to create a fierce heat. The iron melts at approximately 1260°C (bronze 930°C and aluminium 660°C).

The iron is taken from a tapping hole at the front of the furnace and carried to the moulds in a ladle.

### OUR ROUTINE

Friday was cast day; the moulds were clamped and weighted. The furnace was lit with a wood fire at 10 and a bed of coke placed on it. Ladles were heated and we ate lunch at 11. The furnace blower was switched on at 12 and the furnace was loaded with layers of coke, iron and limestone.

A half hour later the furnace was tapped; this was when the hard work began. Ladles were carried to the moulds and iron poured in; back to the furnace for more iron; change the weight and boxes on the plough

share chills. When every job was poured, the bottom of the furnace was knocked out.

Monday was clean-up day; remove the castings, smash; wet the sand and sieve it by hand. Make the facing sand 1 part new sand 3 part old, and a proportion of coal dust. The moulders were then able to start work.

On Thursday the scrap iron was smashed by sledge hammers. The coke bagged and with the iron and lifted to the landing by a hand windlass.

Impressions on seeing a foundry would be heat, smoke and dust, danger; not a good place to be in. There was a great amount of heavy physical labour, breaking the scrap iron into usable pieces and carrying ladles containing up to 500 lbs of molten metal.

My childhood recollections of our foundry, however, were huge heaps of black sand to play in, fireworks every week, fascinating machinery and great heaps of scrap iron.

#### **EARLY FOUNDRIES**

The Cistercian monks in Europe around 1000 AD were the first to operate foundries in a commercial way, but it was not till the industrial revolution in the 18th Century, that foundries operated as we know them today.

Foundries in Australia came into their own with the discovery of gold. At Ballarat for example, as alluvial ran out, there came a need for steam engines to run equipment for reef and deep alluvial lead mining

In Australia, Scott Clow & Prebble opened the first iron foundry in Melbourne, followed by Enock Hughes with a crude rolling mill in 1860. By 1861, Ballarat had 10 foundries, eight for mining equipment and two for producing and repairing agriculture equipment. The Victo-

rian foundries had capacity to produce steam engines with cylinder bores of 635mm and flywheels weighing 10 tonnes.

Around the mid-century, there was considerable expansion in agriculture with wheat and wool becoming important overseas trade commodities, as well as the mining industries. So centres such as Albury, Shepparton and Ruwals at Wangaratta became important places for the manufacture and repair of equipment.

In 1868 an industrial blacksmith shop was established at 436 Townsend Street on the land between Age Concern and the Tax Office, Dr Andrews recorded in his *History of Albury*:

"On this site in November 1883 it was announced that the Iron Foundry Co had been floated. A considerable business was done, but not profitably, and in a few years the industry passed into private hands."

The business was purchased by Lampitts who ran it till 1900, when my grandfather John Palmer Laughton bought it and renamed it the Federal Foundry. As Federation did not occur till 1901, this name mystified me, until I realised it was the fashion to name businesses before the advent, as happened recently when everything was named Twin Cities.

#### **TRADESMEN & PRODUCTS**

All foundries at that time consisted of at least three trade groups: pattern makers, moulders and furnace men, and usually there was a machine shop with machinists.

Our foundry had three furnaces, 2 cupolas and 1 pit furnace. Grey cast iron was number one followed by bronze, lead, zinc and aluminium.

In the early days the foundry had two of the five moulders working on making mining equipment for the Glen Wills gold fields: water turbines, sand

pumps, shoes and dies for grinding pans, portable stamping batteries etc. For the alluvial goldfields around Yackandandah and Sandy Creek: fire bars for the boilers, and parts for the water monitors.

Later as mining declined, attention was turned more to agriculture with animal feeders and water carts. (An interesting fact about these carts was that in this area they were produced by 7 other manufacturers.)

A few headers were produced, but probably the biggest production was cast iron plough shares, up to 100 dozen produced each cast.

At the end of the 1930s we started to produce wool handling equipment, stackers (1600 were produced), presses and wool elevators.

All the time articles such as pulleys, bearing housings, friction winches, sash weights, gears and bronze casting were produced. When the Hume Dam was under construction, large quantities of castings and bearings were produced and machined.

During WWII, various articles were produced for the military including parts for 25 pounder guns.

In the period after the war, with the foundry becoming more mechanized, large quantities of water main and plumbing fittings were produced.

#### **FINAL DECADES**

In 1971, with a partner, Charlie Vrats, I bought my father out and renamed the business Laughton Engineering Co. In 1973, owing to a lack of skilled moulders, we closed the foundry section of the business and concentrated on the main part of the business:



machining and fabrication.

In 1979, Charlie was killed in a car accident, so my wife Heidi and I purchased Charlie's share from the estate and ran the business as partners till we sold it in 2000. So ended one of the oldest family businesses in Albury.

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#### **EARLY DAYS OF THE A&DHS**

Notes from Geoff Hamilton's talk

On 8 November 1960, Mayor Alderman CE Bunton convened a special inaugural meeting at which the Albury & District Historical Society was formed with Ald C E Bunton as Patron; Mr W A Bloomfield, President; Miss C Lyford, Hon Secretary and Ald J C King, Hon Treasurer.

Geoff read from the Minutes of the first meeting and from the *Bulletin* No 1 dated 3 February 1961. Bulletin Editor was Basil Patman. Secretary, Miss Coral Lyford was fulfilling the duties of Treasurer following the untimely death of Ald J C King. Bulletin No 2, dated 16 February, noted the appointment of Mrs R McDonald as Treasurer and Bro J P O'Malley had taken over as Secretary following Miss Lyford's move to Wagga High School.

Following several preliminary membership lists, one dated 30 June 1961, showed Albury City Council as benefactor; nine life members and 83 ordinary members. Members came from as far afield as Corryong, Holbrook, Wagga Wagga, Henty, Culcairn, Barnawatha, Wangaratta, Thologolong and Wodonga.

Geoff mentioned the placing of the Albury Court House on the NSW Heritage Register as an early achievement of the Society. Another later achievement was the building of a lych-gate at the Albury Pioneer Cemetery.

Geoff also displayed samples of the wealth of written material published by the Society. This included booklets, brochures and history sheets.

### **Details for Next Meeting**

Wednesday 10 September at Murray Gardens 36  
Mountford Crescent, East Albury.

**Meeting commences** at 7.30pm so please allow time to enter the village and park.

**Entry & Parking:** to gain entry, punch in **200#** and wait for the gate to open. Park in the vicinity of the Administration Block. Please do not block access for other traffic, or park on the grass.

**Supper:** Please bring something for supper. Tea & coffee will be provided.

John Henwood was a foundation member, and remains a member of the Society today.

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#### **ANTIQUe VALUATION DAY**

Don't forget to bring your antiques and collectables



along to the Albury Library-Museum to have them valued by Mr Ken Buxton on Saturday 13 September. Cost of valuation is \$3 per item.

#### **ALLAN FAMILY SCRAPBOOK**

Mrs Ella Allan has donated a copy of a scrapbook compiled by Miss Irene (Rene) Allan, daughter of James Allan Esq., mayor of Albury in 1912. The Allan family had planned to join the "New Australia" colony in Paraguay in 1893, but problems among the earliest settlers brought the dream to an end. The Misses Allan taught at Albury Public School, and Arthur and Mrs Allan at Albury High School. Mr Allan was Principal 1959-61.

We thank Mrs Allan for her kind donation of this unusual collection.

#### **QEII SQUARE**

Bruce Pennay has added a little more to the story of QEII Square

A market square next to the Mechanics Institute in Dean Street was redeveloped into "Dean Square" as part of a town beautification scheme in 1912. Some thought it should be named after Fallon, others suggested Dight. The *Albury Banner* thought it should take the name 'Sardine' Square as a protest against the presence of an unsightly Fire Brigade building.

Dean Square, it was said, would be 'a rest park', 'a garden retreat', 'a breathing space' in the middle of the commercial district. There were shrubs, gardens, seats and drinking fountains.

Albury Town Band performed regular concerts from a Pioneer Memorial Band Rotunda that was added in 1913.

#### **SPECIAL "FOOD FOR BRITAIN" HAMPER**

Contained 1 tin lamb tongues, 1 tin dripping, 1 tin bacon, 1 tin plum pudding, 1 tin marmalade, 1 tin honey, 1 condensed milk, packet two-way pudding, carton sweets.

Price including packaging and postage, 22/4.

Mate's Ltd advertisement in *Border Morning Mail* 26 May 1948