



# ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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486

## REPORT ON THE NOVEMBER MEETING (12/11/08)

A good attendance, members and visitors, heard and viewed two very different, but equally interesting and informative presentations by Albury Paper Mill senior manager and historian, David Hicks, and Society historian Howard Jones. We are fortunate to be able to call on such competent contributors to add to our knowledge of the history of Albury and district.

Past president and secretary of the Society, Ron Braddy is now resident at Level D Mercy Health Services, Poole Street.

### QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Members could provide a partial answer only for the question as to where and when newsprint paper was first produced in Australia. Leighton Passant provided Tasmania as the location. The answer we were seeking was Boyer in the Derwent Valley Tasmania in 1941.

The newsprint was produced from eucalypt pulp after experi-

mental and development programs commencing in 1915 and undertaken in Tasmania and Western Australia. Two men largely credited with developing the process were L R Benjamin and J R Sommerville. Prior to 1941, all newsprint was imported, the bulk coming from Canada.

### CORRECTIONS to BULLETIN 485

- In the article on wool: Roma Freeman went with her father to Younghusbands to inspect their wool not Farmers & Graziers.
- The date of the Society Christmas Dinner is Friday 12 December no 14<sup>th</sup>.

### ALBURY NEWSPRINT MILL

Report on a talk by David Hicks

David Hicks joined the Albury Paper Mill in 1982 as a shift electrician. Concurrent with his job, he studied engineering by correspondence and gained his Masters degree in 1996. He moved into senior management the same year, and has performed a range of duties subse-

## NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY

10 DECEMBER 2008

7.30pm at Commercial Club

Albury

Speaker: Rosalie Martin "A history of Martin's Buses."

ALSO

General Business, and Show & Tell

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What are the significant Albury & District anniversaries occurring in 2009?

### CHRISTMAS FUNCTION

Friday 12 Dec at Commercial Club 6.30 for 7 p.m.

RSVP June Shanahan

60251324 by 9 December.

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## ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

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**Treasurer:** Chris McQuellin

**Minute Secretary:** Catherine Browne

**Committee:** John Craig, Carole Whitbourn, Jill Wooding, Howard Jones, Jan Marsden and Ray Gear

**Journals & Stock:** John Craig  
**Membership list & Bulletin dispatch:** 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 LibraryMuseum.

A&DHS website:  
[www.alburyhistory.org.au](http://www.alburyhistory.org.au)

quently. He is the author of *Footprints to Hoofprints to Newsprint: the story of the Albury Paper Mill*, published this year.

#### **DECISION**

In 1978, R A Henderson, Chairman of Australian Newsprint Mills Holdings Limited (ANM) announced that ANM would build a paper mill at Ettamogah just north of Albury. The mill proposed to use softwood from the vast plantations around Tumut. The plan posed two significant problems: the use of softwood pulp by a company experienced in using eucalypt pulp; and the environmental effects of a mill on the upper reaches of the Murray River. Exhaustive research and development has resulted in a facility ranked among the top 10 in the world.

#### **THE LAND**

The Albury Mill is sited on land that for millennia was crossed and recrossed by Wiradjuri people in their seasonal pursuit as hunter gatherers. In more recent times the footprints of the Wiradjuri was replaced by the hoofprints of squatters' horses bringing flocks and herds to the rich grazing land discovered by explorers Hume and Hovell. Initially the mill site was part of the huge squatting leases that made up the Mungabareena Run, Battery Hill Run and others.

In 1862, with the coming of the Robertson Land Act, brothers John and Peter McMeekin selected *Maryvale*. In 1875, Frederick J Mitchell purchased the property and added to the acreage. It remained in the Mitchell family till 1924 when it was sold to R P Gibbons. Portion of *Maryvale* was acquired by the Albury Wodonga Development Corporation in 1975 and sold to ANM two years later. ANM purchased the remaining portion of *Maryvale* from the Gibbons family in 1988.

The land at Ettamogah had thus moved from Footprints to Hoofprints to Newsprint which is the title of David's book telling the history of the Albury Paper Mill.

#### **OPENING**

The Albury Paper Mill was officially opened on 28 August 1981 by NSW Premier Neville Wran. There ensued a hectic period as the mill management and staff dealt with issues often not of their own making. The cost of electricity almost doubled, the workforce was still perfecting the process, industrial harmony had to be established, especially between competing unions, and occupational health & safety regulations had to be learned and applied.

In 1988, ownership of the mill passed to News Limited and the Fletcher Challenge Group.

In 1993 the paper machine was rebuilt and recycled fibre added to the process. A second paper machine was again considered. Studies for the second machine were undertaken in 1981 but it did not proceed.

In 1997, News Limited sold their interest in the mill to Fletcher Challenge and plans for the second machine were cancelled even though the components were on the wharf in North America awaiting shipping to Australia.

#### **NORSKE SKOG**

In 2000, Fletcher Challenge sold its papermaking interests world wide and Norwegian company Norske Skogindustrier A.S. became the new owner of the Albury Mill. Rapid changes occurred: an upgrade of the paper machine was approved that would increase annual production from 215,00 tonnes to 265,000 tonnes. This work was completed in 2006, but not without difficulties.

On 17 November 2006, the Albury Paper Mill celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a function attended by many former employees, government and com-

munity leaders.

#### **WHY WRITE**

David gave his reasons for writing the history of the Albury Mill as including: the long and interesting history of the locality; the challenges of the project and dedicated engineering and production effort in overcoming them; and the fact the Albury Mill is in many ways the culmination of a near-century of developing a viable newsprint industry in Australia using firstly eucalypt pulp, then softwood and now incorporating recycled fibre.

Writing this book has been a task David has found very satisfying and rewarding. Copies of the book, *Footprints to Hoofprints to Newsprint*, are available through the PR officer at the Norske Skog Mill, Hume Highway Ettamogah 2641.

# # #

#### **THE ALBURY GAOL**

Talk by Howard Jones

Albury Gaol had a life of 83 years, yet is largely forgotten. It housed men and women who had committed crimes from murder to bigamy, sedition, counterfeiting, malicious wounding and some who simply crossed the Murray River illegally.

#### **BEGINNINGS**

A Court of Petty Sessions was started in Albury in 1840. When the first District Court began sitting in Albury in 1860, a need for a gaol arose. At that time, Albury had a small lock-up between St Matthew's Church and the post office with two cells 12 feet square, called locally the Black Hole. The first judge to sit in Albury, Thomas Callaghan, was horrified by it and demanded the Colonial Government build a gaol.

Bushrangers were still active on the Border at this time. An escaped prisoner, a bushranger called Jack the Devil, was captured by Albury police, held briefly in the lock-up and then sent back to Berrima, on horse-

back in company of two Albury constables, and wearing hand and leg irons. Prisoners arrived in Albury from a wide area of southern NSW.

#### **DESCRIPTION**

Albury Gaol was built in 1861 where Cahill Place and St John's retirement village now stand. It was designed by the Colonial Government as a "Braidwood type", being similar to that at Braidwood and several other gaols including Wagga, Yass and Deniliquin, all built in the early 1860s.

Originally the gaol was a two-storey brick cell block with the gaoler's quarters at the front, including fireplaces that were, of course, denied prisoners. The building had six cells on each floor, measuring 10ft x 6ft (about 3m x 2m). They could take up to three prisoners. Cells in the Junee Correctional Centre are of similar size today.

The gaol took the first prisoners about March, 1862. Michael Tiernan was appointed the first gaoler and his wife, Martha, the matron. On the staff were a turnkey and four warders who were paid six shillings a day each. The man who had built the Courthouse, Thomas Allen, and his wife, became gaoler and matron soon afterwards.

In 1871, the average number of prisoners held was 25, overseen by three warders (two by day and one at night). Some prisoners wore iron shackles. Magistrates visited monthly to record how prisoners were employed and punishments inflicted.

#### **THE EXTENDED GAOL**

Between 1860 and 1880, Albury's population grew from 1500 to 5500, and the railway arrived. A bigger gaol was needed.

The block of 12 cells was extended on two levels in 1879-81, with another 16 cells (four for women), that were 10ft x 10ft. A gaoler's house, an L-shaped block for a workshop, hospital

ward, kitchen and surgery were added. All were built of brick on granite foundations. (Some pre-cut granite blocks were recovered in 1993 for the rebuilding of St Matthew's Church).

Also new was a 16ft high brick perimeter wall enclosing an area measuring 169ft x 170ft, with watchtowers at two corners. The wall tapered from 16 inches at the base to 14 inches, capped by round-topped moulded bricks (still to be seen in 2008 in a nearby front garden at 509 Thurgoona Street). An escaping prisoner would have found it hard to get a grip.

However, two prisoners made a hole in the brick wall in 1882 and escaped, one to Wagga and one to Melbourne.

The gaol had timber gates in front of a 16ft x 16ft iron screen incorporating wrought iron gates. A stone arch over the entrance bore the legend GAOL. The gaoler's house was to the right and the guard room to the left.

The 1879 design included one cell designated for solitary confinement and another was the condemned cell. On June 1, 1881 the condemned cell was used. Henry Wilkinson, 46, was hanged for murdering a woman and her father in a wine shanty on the Jindera Gap. Thirty people watched the execution in the yard.

A bizarre incident was reported in the Albury Banner during the time Wilkinson was awaiting trial: *Chess in the Gaol. Two of the prisoners in the Albury Gaol were detected a few days since playing chess in contravention of the regulations. The board had been made out of an old pair of trousers, and stitched on to a pocket handker-*



Albury gaol c.1947. Cellblock on right. Note rounded coping bricks on wall, now used as garden edging in nearby house.

*chief, the uncovered portion of which formed the white squares. The chessmen were very ingeniously cut out of soap. As playing the game is against the rules of the prison, the board and men were seized and removed.*

#### **GAOLERS OR GOVERNORS**

Thomas Allen remained the gaoler (sometimes called governor) until he was transferred in 1883 after some 20 years in charge.

Next was Frederick Augustus Ramsay, a British veteran of the Crimean War, and a son of a major-general in the Indian Army. Ramsay came to Australia in 1857 and served in the Gold Escort Police at Tumbumba before trying farming. He entered the NSW prison service in 1878, serving at Darlinghurst, Parramatta and Yass gaols before Albury. It was in Ramsay's time that NSW passed an Act allowing prisoners to work outside gaols.

Dean Street had plenty of violence and drunken behaviour 120 years ago. In 1887, a man who stabbed two others in Dean Street got three years in gaol.

The next gaoler, Douglas Rowley, came in 1888. Rowley, 40, a former schoolmaster and storekeeper at Parramatta, had seven children living with

him at the gaoler's house. He died from dropsy in November 1889.

Apart from Wilkinson the murderer and Rowley the gaoler, nine people died at the gaol between 1881 and 1890.

Inquests were held at the gaol. Sometimes the coroner appointed 12 jurors, six of them prisoners. One such prisoner-juror was Sidney Primrose, a young bank clerk serving a sentence for embezzlement.

The gaol record books are still kept in Sydney. Some contain photographs of prisoners (from 1884), and a microfilm of these can be viewed at the Albury Library-Museum.

Several Chinese who crossed from Victoria were arrested in Albury in 1893 and 1894 and held in the gaol for evading the poll tax.

In 1894 the prisoners included the "Dora Dora murderers", two Queensland Aboriginals who speared to death a man in 1892, but escaped and were on the run for two years. They were sentenced to death, but the sentences were commuted to long periods of imprisonment.

**LIFE IN GAOL**

Prisoners were not idle. Men worked in the workshops or gaol gardens, chopped wood, laid bricks, painted and did some carpentry.

Women were given knitting, sewing, washing, cooking and sweeping, the whole idea being to make the gaol self-sufficient. Prisoners made all the prison clothing, socks and hats. Some of this was sent to other gaols.

**POLITICS**

In 1909, there was a famous trial at the Albury Court House, when several leading socialists were tried for sedition, riot, unlawful assembly and conspiracy at the Broken Hill mining riots.

Tom Mann, who had organised a big docks strike in London,



Does anyone know anything about this photograph; where it was taken; what was the occasion and who were the men? One is believed to be James Francis Molony, cattle dealer & butcher of Beechworth, Indigo, Howlong & Albury between 1855 and 1883.

was found not guilty. He became a leading national trade union leader in England during and after World War I.

Henry Holland, a Sydney journalist, was found guilty of sedition and sentenced to two years in the Albury gaol, but was released after only five months. He moved to New Zealand, became a Labour MP and Leader of the Labour Party from 1919 until his death in 1933, shortly before Michael Savage became New Zealand's first Labour Prime Minister.

Mrs Mann accompanied her husband to Albury. The Judge had to order the governor of the gaol to allow Tom Mann to have his pyjamas. After all, he was only on remand.

In World War I, some early communists, known as Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World) were arrested in NSW for anti-war activity.

Tom Barker was a union organiser who spent several weeks in Albury gaol. He worked later in Russia and knew Lenin and Trotsky, and ended up a trade union leader in England and local councillor in London.

Paul Schmoork was a German sailor who arrived in Australia in 1911. He was gaoled for six months in Wagga in May, 1915, for spreading reports likely to

cause alarm among the civilian population.

In August 1915, James Lalor, of Ballarat, got nine months for making statements likely to hinder recruiting, but was released after three months.

The gaol continued throughout the Depression years and into the 1940s. It was officially closed in 1943, but the Army used it during the war as a lock-up.

After the war it fell derelict and became a playground for kids until it was demolished in 1947. The Government transferred it to the Housing Commission, who used the bricks for the flats.

# # #

**MEMBERSHIP ADDENDUM**

Family: N Read & L Rayner  
**Individual:** V Colley, J Craig, H Glachan, P Harper, D Hennessy, Mrs Jones, M Murray.

**REMINDER FOR 2009**

There is **no members' meeting** in January. The first meeting for the Society is Wednesday 11 February.

**Committee** are reminded however, they meet next on Wednesday 21 January.