



# ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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## REPORT ON THE APRIL ACTIVITY (19/4/09)

A crowd of 130 people gathered at the Albury Pioneer Cemetery for the 2009 Cemetery Walk. Nine presenters told the stories of 12 people buried in the cemetery. Our presenters were Joe Wooding, Ray Gear, Helen Livsey, Pauline Harbick, Howard Jones, Chris McQuellin, Ann Brennan, Kevin Monte and Doug Hunter.

Subjects ranged from Colonel John Wilkinson, described as 'short-listed' for "Albury citizen of the century" to designer of the Albury War Memorial, Louis Harrison, to John Conness, discoverer of gold in the Chiltern-Indigo district.

The amount of information gathered by our researchers is too much for one Bulletin, but far too important to go unrecorded, so it will be included in subsequent Bulletins. Or, is it possible we can add the 12 biographies this year to the 14 we did last year and publish a Cemetery Booklet?

Again we noted the weathering and deterioration of the earlier graves in particular. Reading or photographing inscriptions has become difficult. Fortunately, a transcription of headstones done in 1980-81 is in the Library.

Our new portable PA system, purchased with a Federal Government grant, made it easy for our presenters to be heard by the gathering.

In response to last month's Bulletin, John Henwood has written, adding to the story of the Turks Head Hotel. See page 6.

**We extend sincere condolences to John Craig and his family on the sad loss of wife & mother, Heather. Heather had not experienced good health for several years finally resulting in her death on 24 April 2009.**

## NEXT MEETING

WEDNESDAY

13 MAY 2009

7.30pm at Commercial

Club

Albury

Speaker: Betty Dunn

"Naming Lavington."

ALSO

Ephemera Night

## QUESTION OF THE MONTH

In lieu of a question, please bring along to the meeting any photographs of Lavington that could be copied for the Centenary Celebrations.

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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 LibraryMuseum.

A&DHS website:

[www.alburyhistory.org.au](http://www.alburyhistory.org.au)

## **WILLIAM JOSEPH GORDON**

(1857-1903)

**Compiled by Ray Gear**

Just before dark on Tuesday the 26 August 1902 when returning by bicycle from attending business at Burrumbuttock, William Gordon had an accident from which he never fully recovered. He died on the 4 July 1903 aged 45.

Born in Sydney in 1857, William Joseph Gordon arrived in Albury via Goulburn in 1869 when aged 12, with his parents, John Gordon, an Architect, and Eliza (nee Roberts). On leaving school he joined his fathers Architectural practice and became in 1878 an Associate of the Victorian Institute of Architects.

Following the drowning of their father, William and his brother Charles at the start of 1880 formed the Architectural firm Gordon & Gordon. Ten years later in 1890 their practice had offices in Melbourne, Corowa, Rutherglen, Mansfield, Benalla, Euroa, Wangaratta, Albury, Seymour and Wodonga. In Albury, they designed over a 22 year period more than 77 new buildings plus numerous alterations, additions and minor works. New buildings still standing today include:- Cottage at 499 Hume St (1883); Railway Commercial Hotel (1885); Higgins Coach Factory (1885); St Patricks School Hall (1885); Victorian style dwelling at 653 Kiewa St (1888); Carriageway (1889); Beehive Corner Building (1889) and Cottage at 460 Swift Street (1891).

In 1883 William began an eleven year association with the Albury Municipal Council, consulting on a range of functions, in particular engineering and surveying. He was at times a member of local organisations including the Albury Federal Capital Association and the Albury Vine & Fruit Growers Association.

William never married. His obituaries noted him as an unassuming, a person of abstemious and studious habits, having an interest in literary and scientific subjects.

## **EDWARD SCANLAN**

(1839-1906)

**Compiled by Chris McQuellin**

Edward Scanlan was born in 1839 at Ruthin a town in northern Wales with origins going back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. He first came to Australia as a 23yr old coming initially to Brisbane in 1862 where he tried his hand at plumbing (his trade) and later farming. Queensland in the 1860's was a rough hard life and Edward Scanlan decided to return to the UK.

Whist he intended to settle down back at home, his roving spirit was once again tempted and he sailed back to Australia in 1870. He initially landed in Melbourne and there met Catherine Corley and after a three month courtship the cou-

ple married.

The booming Ovens Goldfields acted as a magnet for the young couple. They settled at Eldorado to the north of Wangaratta where their first son James was born in 1871. James, who was a returned soldier from two wars, is buried in the Catholic section further up the path.

The Scanlans were to stay in El Dorado for about three years after having some success on the gold fields, before moving to Albury in 1874. He commenced a plumbing business in Kiewa Street initially, but as business improved he eventually purchased the site now occupied by A.T. Jones on the corner of Kiewa and Stanley Street.

Scanlan's business was the predecessor to the present A.T. Jones core business where Scanlan was also involved in water reticulation in the early days of Albury and in plumbing and tank supplies.

He was also a member of the Mechanics Institute locally for about 30 years.

In local politics he was a municipal councillor for a number of years where his expert knowledge was of assistance as the city developed its water and sewerage systems. He was also on council for the opening of the Union Bridge across the Murray in Wodonga Place.

In regional politics he was an ardent protectionist and took an active part in supporting the then member for Hume, Sir William Lyne.

Locally Scanlan was responsible for the formation of the Albury Gas Company and was a very large shareholder. He was also involved in the Albury Brewing Company following the merger of the Headley and Billson breweries.

At the time of his death he was managing director of Albury Brewing.

Edward was a member of Manchester Unity Institute of Oddfellows for nearly 35 years.

Personally he was one of Albury's best known residents – his obituary described him as well read and a just, charitable and generous man and upright both in his business and private life.

He left a widow and seven children.

Brother John Hands Paine read a burial service of the Manchester Unity order, amongst a large gathering of Albury citizens.

Rev F Bevan, the Rector of St Matthews, also officiated at the burial service.

Most of the family were present except for the eldest son James who had stayed in South Africa after his service to the empire during the Boer War.

## **Ephemera Night**

This is your opportunity to bring and tell about an item of passing historical interest.

### **LOUIS HARRISON**

(1866 -1934)

Compiled by Ray Gear

On the 19 March 1915 the *Albury Banner* announced that Louis Harrison of Deniliquin had began an architectural practice in Albury. For nearly nineteen years he was to continue practising in Albury.

Born at Wanganella near Deniliquin in 1866 he was the youngest son of English born Frederick Harrison and Emma (nee Havard) Harrison. After leaving school he joined his father's Architectural practice. In 1899 he was elected a Fellow of the Victorian Institute of Architects. During his years in Deniliquin as well as designing many Deniliquin buildings he was an Alderman of Deniliquin Council and Secretary of the Deniliquin P & A Society.

By the middle of 1917 Albury was the principal residence of the Harrisons. Albury buildings designed by Louis still standing today include:- Albury Monument (1924); Regent Theatre (1926); ANZAC House (1926); St Patricks Hall (1927); Younghusband's Wool Store (1927); California Bungalow dwelling at 713 Pemberton St (1929); Spanish Mission dwelling at 671 Forrest Hill Ave (1930) and the Ambulance Station (1934).

In 1927 Louis was among the founders of the Albury Rotary Club. A known singer in Deniliquin he was a member of St Patrick's choir for over twenty years.

Louis passed away on the 31 October 1934 aged 68 and was remembered as having a happy nature, a quite dignity and a mellow personality. He was survived by his wife Eliza (nee King) whom he married in 1901, a son and two daughters.

### **JOHN CONNESS**

(1828-1886)

Compiled by Helen Livsey

On Australia Day this year Chiltern celebrated the 150th anniversary of the discovery of gold at Indigo and John Conness was responsible for that discovery and the celebration for which people travelled from all over the world to attend!

John Conness could be called a professional miner. He mined from Ballarat to the Turon and covered a lot of the alphabet in between. In 1858 he was only 30 but was already described as 'an old digger'.

He was said to be a French Canadian born at sea in 1828, but I can only tell you of his life after he came to this area. He usually worked with his brother-in-law, Hugh Gibson, and sometimes they were joined by Hugh's brother, John.

In 1858 mining parties were sinking for gold on Mr Gibson's farm near the Albury Cemetery. The shaft was 120' deep and they were working day and night. The search may not have been

successful because a month later John Conness advertised Gibson's farm for sale. It was 84 acres, half a mile from the township on the main Sydney Road.

The next we know of John Conness is at Chiltern when the *Ovens and Murray Advertiser* of Sept 20, 1858 printed news of a new rush at Indigo Creek. Ten days later several hundred miners were angry and believed they had been hoodwinked by Publican, Edward Morgan. They captured him and prepared for a lynching! After an investigation Mr Morgan was cleared of suspicion and there was a stampede of miners to peg out claims. By October there were 2000 diggers there.

When friends and creditors advocated a Government reward for Edward Morgan as discoverer of the Indigo Gold Field, John Conness wrote in the *Indigo Advertiser* in 1858 that he first discovered gold on the Indigo and that was what induced him to move there from Ballarat. He worked alone for six weeks, struck gold and it was then that Morgan joined him. His claims were substantiated and the Victorian Government awarded him £500. The *Albury Banner* said, "We wish that so practical a man as Mr Conness could be induced to come to try his hand at Albury".

Late in 1858 he formed the Nil Desperandum Company and within a year he and a party had the first pump installed on the New Ballarat Lead at the site of Chiltern. John Alston Wallace, who had started his chain of Star Hotels, suggested and financed the steam pumping plant and his investment gave him a one-twelfth share of the claim. David Wallace who is a member of the Albury Race Club is a descendant of John Alston.

In 1861 Conness was in charge of the Golden Gate Co. at Rutherglen. He sold his share in 1863 and went to Dargo.

It has been suggested that Conness could have been one of the Eureka rioters who hid in the Iron Bark Forest until after the trials which freed the Eureka prisoners.

Conness had been the driving force in opening up the Indigo Lead and the New Ballarat Leads but did not make a fortune at Chiltern.

At Dargo in March 1866 he had one of the two richest reefs. His company erected an 8-head battery but two years later they abandoned Upper Dargo and proposed moving the battery to Grant.

In 1867 John Conness married Janet Gibson in Victoria and they had children whose births were registered in Albury.

At beginning of the 1870s he took out a min-

ing lease at The Cotton Tree Diggings, Granya. The ore was sent to Hawksview, about 40 miles downstream, for crushing but the costs forced him to abandon the area.

John Conness proved a controversial subject when he applied for a mining lease at Bethanga in 1876. Until then it was accepted that Bethanga was a poor man's diggings for miners with only a moderate amount of money available and working on a Miner's Right. The miners reacted with indignation to Conness' application and campaigned against the lease being granted. They were not against leasing but only that it would be wrong at Bethanga under conditions there at that time, and they won their case.

In 1882 he secured the freehold of a small selection at Talgarno. By 1885 he had 80 acres at Bowna where he died the following year, aged only 58.

His funeral cortege left Soden's Hotel for the graveside service. His wife lived on until 1927 when she died aged 89.

Their name is perpetuated in Conness Street, Chiltern.

#### **COLONEL JOHN WILKINSON V.D.**

(1854-1941)

**Compiled by Joe Wooding**

If you were tasked to select the Albury citizen who has made the greatest contribution to his community, John Wilkinson would be on the short list.

Born on the Isle of Sheppey at the mouth of the Thames on 22 June 1854, Wilkinson came to Australia with his doctor father Henry and mother Mary, at the age of 3, disembarking in Sydney. The doctor practiced in Bathurst and Young before the family, consisting of 3 sons and 3 daughters moved to Albury in 1862 but relocated to Sale, Victoria some 3 years later.

In the following year, Dr Wilkinson died, and subsequently his widow and children returned to Albury.

Aged 15, John Wilkinson left school to study law, being articled to Albury Solicitor, Mr Joseph Dwyer. The records show his studies were successful as in March 1881, he established a successful Albury legal practice, which 128 years later, we know as Kell Moore Solicitors. For an unbroken period of 53 years, Wilkinson had been at the helm.

Long before Federation, Wilkinson showed an interest in local defence matters, joining the Albury Reserve Corps, Volunteer Infantry. On his 34<sup>th</sup> birthday of 22 June 1888, he was commissioned Captain and took command of that organization. With modernization occurring, Captain Wilkinson succeeded to the command of H.

Company 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment Volunteer Infantry. On 9 June 1896, he rose to the field rank of Major.

Under the Federal Plan, country units were converted to Light Horse and Artillery units, so in 1903 the infantry company became an artillery unit when the Major became first officer commanding No 4 NSW Battery Australian Field Artillery. Wilkinson maintained his military interest, eventually rising to the rank of Colonel.

He was then given command of all senior and junior cadets in a vast area of the Riverina, extending from Germanton (Holbrook) to Harden, Hay and Deniliquin, with the Murray River as its' southern boundary.

His military service was recognized when, as a Major, he was awarded the Volunteer Officer's Decoration (VD). This was a long service medal for officers in the Volunteer Defence Forces with a minimum 20 years of service. He retired with the rank of Colonel shortly before World War I.

Politics were also a challenge. In January 1889, he unseated the sitting member, Mr George Day, to become MLA for Albury. Wilkinson successfully contested 3 elections.

The Mechanics Institute was another organization which benefited from his involvement, being President for 46 years until it was incorporated by the Council. Only twice in all that time, was his position challenged. He held the confidence of the members on each occasion.

He was President of the Lawn Tennis Association for a number of years. Billiards and Snooker were also among his sporting interests. The Albury Club records show him as a member from 1894 until his death.

He was the father of 3 sons and a daughter, 2 of whom, Charles John and Laurie (Mrs AS Mitchell) pre-deceased him. His wife Elspeth, died on 4 April 1928.

Perhaps his greatest interest was cricket, giving nearly 70 years of service and commitment. In 1877, Wilkinson had joined the committee of the Albury Cricket Club where Mr CH Dight was Vice President. Something of a big hitting 'all rounder' with considerable wicket keeping skills, the Colonel is credited with hitting a ball from the Albury Sportsground into the property known as 'Ranelagh' on Hume Street corner.

Some might say his greatest legacy is his years of service as President of the Cricket Association which during his lifetime, was constituted on 35 occasions with the Colonel President on 32 on them. He was also President of the Albury Cricket Club for something like 12 years when the Association was not formed.

The highlights of his association presidency include the formation of the Albury Cricket Association in 1894, formation of the ABCA in 1909, visits by New Zealand in 1914, Warwick Armstrong's Victorian XI in 1920, John Douglas' England XI in 1921, West Australia in 1925 and Bradman's NSW XI in 1933, as well as the inaugural ABCA Melbourne Country Week venture in 1934.

I think you would agree, this man led a very full life.

**CHARLES HILTON DIGHT**

(1841-1913)

Compiled by Joe Wooding

At this grave, we gain an insight into not only some of Albury's earliest history but a little of Australia's as well.

While much of the life of Charles Hilton Dight 1841 - 1913 is included in the story *150 Not Out' - 150 years of Albury Cricket* - published 18 months ago, it would be remiss of me not to include a little about his parents, who also share this site.

They were his father, John Dight, born at Richmond, NSW on 2 September 1808, one of 13 children and his mother, Isabella nee Mitchell, born on 16 May 1816 at Brisbane Meadows, near Bungonia, NSW. They were married at Scots Presbyterian Church, Sydney on 27 August 1832.

Their first daughter, Jane Elizabeth, arrived on 13 October 1833. Charles Hilton was born on 31 January 1841, John and Isabella's 5th child in a family which numbered 14 by 1861.

Apart from being a mill owner at Campbelltown, John Dight and his 4 brothers were establishing themselves as pastoral pioneers, being involved in treks to the Hunter, Namoi and MacIntyre Rivers in Northern NSW, before John selected land on the Murray, west of Albury in 1837, almost certainly on the advice of his brother-in-law, Hamilton Hume. This was to become Bungowannah Station.

Dight's elder sister Elizabeth had married Alexander Hamilton Hume soon after his 1824 expedition through this area to Port Phillip and back at St. Phillip's Church of England, Sydney on 8 November 1825.

Surely, it must be more than pure coincidence that the first settlers here, Charles Hotson Ebdon in 1835 and soon afterwards, the Huons, the Mitchells, the Dights, and even Robert Brown, were all linked by marriage and influenced by Hume's description of this area. There had been a moratorium imposed by the Governor of New South Wales on settlement so far from Sydney after Hume and Hovell's Expedition.

John Dight's fascination with Australia's river systems saw him and his younger brother,



**Dight family graves showing the unfortunate deterioration of many of the historical graves in the Pioneer Cemetery. While there has been vandalism on occasions, most damage is owing to weathering and ground subsidence. Inscriptions are barely legible on many headstones.**

Charles Hilton Dight (their mother's maiden name was Hilton), construct the first water powered flour mill at Dight's Falls on the Yarra River in the district of Port Philip in 1840. Some of Albury's first flour milling was done at Bungowannah where the family constructed another water driven mill.

Charles Hilton Dight was just 39 years old when he died in Melbourne in 1852, just a year after the district of Port Philip was proclaimed the colony of Victoria.

It is not clear when John, Isabella and their family finally settled at Bungowannah Station. Their eldest children were born at Campbelltown NSW, others at Dights Falls in Victoria. It appears that only their last child, Florence Sophie Annie was born in Albury in 1861, baptized in Albury in 1862, and died on 1 February 1865. Her headstone depicts an anomaly.

The Robertson Land Act of 1861 saw Bungowannah Station reduced from 150 sq miles (96,000 acres) to around 6,000 acres.

Some of the hardships of 19th century life can be seen by the fact that at her death, Isabella had been predeceased by 4 of her 5 sons. One heartbreak occurred when, in September 1878, her eldest son, Thomas John's riderless horse returned to the homestead. Days of searching failed to find any trace of him.

A most charitable man and fine sportsman, Charles Hilton Dight Jnr was first noted as a 19 year old in April 1860 when the Albury Cricket Club XI played a return match at Wagga Wagga. The team departed Albury on Sunday, reaching their destination about 5pm Monday. Albury won a very wet match by 8 wickets. The scores Wagga Wagga 39 + 45, Albury 53 + 2/33. Dight's contribution was 6, then 6 n.o. in the

second innings. Scores were very modest compared with what we see today. Underarm bowling was still in vogue in Australia until 1864.

Never seeking or accepting any public office, Dight's contribution to Albury cricket as a player, curator, administrator, patron and benefactor lasted throughout his lifetime. On one occasion he donated a piano to St. Matthew's Church as a raffle prize. The hospital and other charities also benefited greatly from his generosity.

The Albury Cricket Ground was established in 1868 with the wicket being clay brought from Bungowannah. Dight received accolades from far and wide for the quality of the turf wickets he prepared there. Golf and bowls were also of interest.

He was a member of the Albury Club for many years.

Albury historian, WG Henderson, had this to say shortly after his death:

*The turf wicket at the sportsground was beautifully kept in order, as a work of love, by the late Charles Dight, an ardent cricketer and an artist with the scythe. In the early days of the formation of the Gardens all mowing was done by scythe so the keeping of the turf wicket in good order was not the easy work of today. People may wish to think of Charles Hilton Dight when they pass the drinking fountain erected in his honour in the Albury Botanical Gardens.*

He was survived by his widow, one son and three daughters.

still intended to pull down. As Jack Sarvaas lived in the same street as we did, Edmondson Avenue, it was not far to walk to do some lobbying. If my memory of the Turk's Head is correct the detached kitchen was not demolished.

Unfortunately Mr Sarvaas was not a conservationist when it came to restoring the building. He replaced the windows with new ones of a different design, removed chimney stacks, pulled out built-in cedar cupboards beside fireplaces, removed two exterior doors, which the builder doing the work gave me. There may even have been more unnecessary alterations. The builder who had the contract told me he had reservations about what he was doing. A comparison of the before and after photos of the exterior of the Turks Head show the difference. These days what was done to the Turks Head would be described as "reconstruction" and not a "restoration".

At least the basic building survived and the A&DHS can be proud of this. If the committee had not acted as it did, the Turks Head would have joined the long list of historically important buildings in Albury that have been demolished.

Year later the same builder who did the original alterations asked me for one of the exterior doors which was stored under 621 Edmondson Avenue. I was delighted to see it reinstated in the Turks Head. However I still regret the unnecessary changes that were made to the building, as it was closer to its original state prior to the reconstruction than it was after the work was done.

\* \* \*

[Thanks to John for his ongoing interest in Albury's History.]

#### **MARYSVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Do you have any photographs of historic Marysville? If so, the Marysville Historical Society would love a copy to show what the town looked like in years gone bye. Their collection was destroyed in the fire of 7 February 2009.**

**Contact Doug Hunter if you have anything.**

#### **RE: "TURKS HEAD CONNECTION ENDED?"**

Letter from John Henwood

The report in the April 2009 Bulletin issue reminded me of another part of the attempt to save the Turks Head. It followed the lobbying by the A&DHS committee members of Jack Sarvaas, the City Engineer.

Soon after that event I spent about an hour one weekend afternoon trying to persuade Jack Sarvaas to keep the detached hotel kitchen, which he

#### **AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ARCHIVES PROJECT**

This project has been set up by the National Foundation for Australian Women in partnership with La Trobe University to locate records which tell the story of the contribution of Victorian rural women: their work, their leaders and their organisations. They are interested in the unsung women who have run hotels and farms, stock agencies and general stores; those who established local branches of Red Cross and CWA, etc.

Records can be anything from a diary or letters home, to business records to minutes of meetings, an article in a local newspaper or an oral history interview.

The aim is to describe the item and record its location, not to gather it into a central repository. For more information contact; Dr Janet Butler at La Trobe University by email at [J.Butler@latrobe.edu.au](mailto:J.Butler@latrobe.edu.au)