



ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC BULLETIN

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AUGUST 2009

493

REPORT ON THE JULY MEETING (8/7/09)

Tom Jelbart, long-time member of the Historical Society, and now a resident of Dellacourt Hostel welcomed the 50 strong gathering to Granite Hall. The gathering included 20 Society members. Our new president, Chris McQuellin, chaired his first meeting with confidence.

Michael and Catherine Browne set up a static display of early farming and household items, and Joe Wooding brought along two large photographs of early Albury.

David Nicholson spoke about his life as a pharmacist including his training in Sydney and conducting his chemist shop in three different Albury locations. There were some surprising incidents including David's role in breaking a drug dealing scheme and the time he was called upon to break into the residence of his landlady to "pay the rent". Three Society members present on the night, Joe Wooding, Peter Whitbourn and Leighton Passant, as schoolboys, had delivered medicines after school for David.

Jill Wooding provided a testing trivia quiz that ended with most people sucking on sweets. Joe Wooding told of the lengthy efforts to set up the Time Ball in Dean Street to enable residents to set their clocks and watches and thus be on time for appointments.

Our thanks go to the staff at Dellacourt who assisted in every way, especially with supper, to make the evening such a pleasant one.

NEXT MEETING
Wednesday 12 August
2009 7.30 p.m. at the
Commercial Club
Members' Night
Opportunity for 5-10
minute talk about your
family, interest, or re-
search.

Contact Chris McQuellin
or Helen Livsey to book
a place on the program.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

**Who made the first tele-
phone call in Albury, when
and from where? And how
much did it cost?**

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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

DAVID NICHOLSON
ALBURY PHARMACIST

Talk given at Dellacourt 10.7.2009

PHARMACY APPRENTICE

I was a Balldale boy. After I matriculated from Corowa Intermediate High School I embarked on a career as a pharmacist. In those days the training was by way of an apprenticeship together with lectures at university and finally Pharmacy Board exams.

In 1941, I began my apprenticeship with Fred Willson-White in the AMP building, on the corner of AMP Lane and Dean Street. In those days the streets of Abury were paved with khaki uniforms with all the young soldiers from Bandiana. Nearly all of those soldiers came into the pharmacy to buy a toothbrush not that they were interested in dental hygiene as their days were fully occupied, but the nights were quite boring for them. There was no entertainment, nothing organised for them at all so they would get the handles of the toothbrushes and carved them into paper knives, key rings, bookmarks and things like that.

HORSE OF ANOTHER COLOUR

In 1943, my indentures were transferred to Rockdale, a suburb of Sydney, so I could attend the Sydney University lectures in the morning and go back to the pharmacy in the afternoon for shop experience. I was serving at the front counter one day and become really excited after completing a sale. He rushed to Mr. Ainsworth, the boss, at the back of the shop and said "I have just made a colossal sale." He said, "What did you sell Dave?" and I said "I just sold 12 bottles of Ineptie hair dye, four and quarter black."

Well you would have thought that someone had stuck a pin in Mr. Ainsworth's backside – he jumped up and said, "Dave, who bought it?" So we ran out onto the street and I pointed out the man walking up the steps to the railway station and dear old Harry watched the bloke until he disappeared from sight and he said, "Dave you know what he is going to do with that don't you – he is going to the sand hills at the back of Bankstown and he is going to change the colour of a racehorse."

Not for one minute did I doubt what Mr. Ainsworth had to say as he was one of the biggest punters in Sydney. On Thursday when the acceptances for the Saturday races came, you would hear him ringing his bets through. There was a £100 on one horse, £200 on another, £500 on something else.

One Saturday evening I can remember the headlines in the paper, 'Suburban chemist won £5,000 on a double this afternoon'. To get that in to perspective £500 in those days would buy a nice two



David Nicholson in Tribune Street shop with staff and customers c.1960

bedroom house in almost any suburb in Sydney.

Old Harry was a big punter. He bought all that money back to the pharmacy in cash, sorted it out in numerical sequence and stashed it away in an Arnott's biscuit tin, not one of those small tins; the money was neatly stacked in one of the commercial catering tins. Where did he keep all that money? In the front display window of his shop. He had the biscuit tin standing up and a card in front of it saying, *Use Ipana Toothpaste*. The tin couldn't be seen from the street and from the shop side he had a couple of plywood sliding doors and they were closed all the time when the shop was open and as soon as we closed the shop at night he opened those doors. The reasoning was should somebody break in, what's the first thing they would do? Close those two plywood doors so no one could see them from the street.

RESEARCH DEMONSTRATOR

At the end of 1945 I had passed all my Pharmacy Board and University exams, but I couldn't registrar as a pharmacist as I was only 20 years old; I had to be 21. While I was trying to make up my mind what I would do in that slack year I was invited back to the university as a research demonstrator. I will tell you about some of my research work in those days - Coal Tar ointment was commonly prescribed to itchy skin conditions. It was extremely hard to make and it was even harder to get the gritty lumps out of it and would always separate into two layers. David had to find out a way of making it a uniform preparation and more suitable for use. It didn't last very long though as cortisone ointment came on the market and killed the coal tar market. So much for my research work.

To demonstrate to the pharmacy students and the incoming medical students was rewarding and very interesting. It was 1946, the war had ended

and quite a lot of the prisoners of war and soldiers had returned to Australia. One of the noticeable blokes in our class was Jimmy Milner who had been in Changi all through the war years. He eventually became Chairman of Directors of Washington Soul Pattinson and Co, President of the NRMA, Chairman of Queensland Mines and director on numerous other boards.

Another bloke was Richard Withers. He parachuted behind the enemy lines and used to send radio messages back to Australia twice a day talking about troop movements and various topics which was a benefit to the allies. From time to time they would drop supplies to him including Max Factor cosmetics, fish hooks and pocket-knives and he said he owed his life to Max Factor as he used theatrical make-up to paint himself the same colour as the natives. Quite a remarkable guy.

One day I was demonstrating to the class and a big red-headed bloke with tall broad shoulders wearing a beautiful suit, came in. He was allocated a space to do his dispensing at the bench whereupon he reached down and took off his belt and threw it on the bench in front of him. Attached to the belt was a leather holster and a pistol; he was a member of the police force who was training to be a pharmacist so he could get a job in the drug squad in Sydney. Boy, he frightened the life out of me when the pistol came into view.

PROFESSOR COTTON

Sometime ago there was an article written up in the *Border Mail* about Professor Cotton from the Sydney University. During the war the Germans had their Stuka dive bombers with which they had considerable success, so the allies came forward with their own dive bombers. It was found with the plane coming to the bottom of its dive and then going straight up again the G force would drag the contents of the pilot's chest down to their tummy so the heart became elongated and it couldn't pump blood to the brain. The pilot would black out and of course when the pilot blacked out it was easy time for them to be shot down.

Professor Cotton invented a safety suit to prevent this happening. I saw Professor Cotton's prototype of that suit. It was made out of hessian and a wadding contraption, about the same size and same shape of an Aussie Rules football, then on each of the pointed ends of the football he had hessian tapes each one about two or three yards long. The idea was that the pilot would breathe in to get the contents of his tummy up into his chest and he would put the football shape thing into his tummy and strap it very tight so it wouldn't move and when they would dive in the plane the blood still got through to the brain and the pilot wouldn't black out. Professor Cotton announced at the



Tom Jelbart and David Nicholson reminiscing at the A&DHS meeting at Dellacourt 10.7.2009

time he realised that when man went to the moon he would be wearing his suit and that is exactly what happened. Professor Cotton died young which was a shame as he had so much to contribute.

TRIBUNE STREET

At the end of the year at the University I was able to register. I did some relieving work around Sydney then heard there were premises in Tribune Street Albury if I wanted to open up a pharmacy. I came down to Albury and found that the building was owned by the De Mamiel estate. Miss Kate De Mamiel who lived in Young Street was the person I dealt with. She was something of a character in the area; a bit eccentric.

One day Dr Woods came into the pharmacy and asked me to go with him down to Kate De Mamiel's as she hadn't been seen for a few days and Dr Woods thought she may have been unwell. We went down and knocked on every door and window, but there was no answer.

All of a sudden Dr. Woods disappeared and left me on my own, but while I was trying to work out what I was going to do next, Sergeant Carl Spence and another policeman arrived. Sergeant Spence put his shoulder to the door and a voice came from inside the house: "Who in the bloody hell is trying to break into my house?" Quick as a flash Sergeant Spence said, "It's David Nicholson, just brought the rent around for you!" Then he cleared out and left me to face the music.

My pharmacy was near the Grammar School and I once had a patient, an Asian student, who had leprosy. No need to be alarmed as it was over 60 years ago – leprosy has an incubation period of 17 years, so it was no big deal, but a bit unusual.

CALLING ON THE LOCAL MEMBER

In about 1960, a bushfire came up through Barnawartha to the back of Wodonga. There was one fireman, very badly burnt, and Dr. Benjamin got in touch with me and asked if he could get some ACTH. It was the forerunner to cortisone. I rang the drug company in Melbourne and couldn't get it and then rang Sydney. Fortunately they had some in stock so I asked them could they please put it on the passenger train overnight to Albury, so I would have it first thing next morning. The drug company said that it was too late for them to do anything about it, but they said they would get it ready if someone was able to pick it up to take it to the railway. I rang Dudley Gordon Padman, State Member for Albury, and he personally picked up the parcel from the drug company and gave it to the guard on the train that was going to Albury that night. That was good representation from the local member wasn't it?

V2 ROCKETS

One of my Repatriation patients had been in the Air Force. When he was on active duty in England, he was given a specially modified Spitfire. It had two extra belly tanks so that he could fly a greater distance and could discard the tanks without losing any speed. He had 8 cameras mounted underneath his plane. The pilot then had to go in with pinpoint navigation to a certain spot in Europe, fly at a certain height, distance and speed no matter how many anti-aircraft shells came at him and how many times they tried to shoot him down, he had to maintain that course, then he dived and weaved to get away.

He never knew, and I never knew, but could he have been the bloke who got the photos of the V2 rockets in Peenemunde before they were released on London? Who knows? He said the photos he took were just tall shadows. The rockets were stored in an upright position and the sun would have caused the shadows. It is a pity that Professor Cotton hadn't got his suit onto the market before that because that patient died at an early age with an elongated heart.

DRUG BUST

When I was in the shop, corner of Stanley and Kiewa Streets, a Pharmacy Board inspector came in – I had known him for years. He said, "David have you made up any scripts for Old King Cole of late? I would like to see your drug register; open it up at Biceptine for me will you." Biceptine is a synthetic drug, a pain killer, extremely potent and highly addictive.

I went through and found the prescription but at that stage in my life I couldn't read my own hand writing, so I had instituted a photocopy system with scripts. I kept a copy of every prescription

that I handled. I got out the photo copy of the particular script that he was looking for and the inspector danced around the shop singing, because the doctor in Sydney had organised a very cunning plan. He had addicts come into him at his practice seeking his help with their drug problems. He gave them as many narcotics as they wanted and got them feeding out of his hand, but before doing that he got a new issue of prescriptions pads. He ordered a 100 pads then reported to the police that most of them had been stolen. He used to write the scripts for 50 Biceptine tablets and one repeat.

In those days the prescription belonged to the patient so we had to give the repeat prescription back. Then the drug addict would take all his bottles of tablets and repeat prescriptions back to the doctor. The doctor burned the prescription and if challenged by the authorities that he had ordered these prescriptions he told them that my prescriptions pads were stolen and the prescriptions, forgeries. When the drug addict took them back to the doctor, he burnt them. But, I had the photo copy with his signature and everything on it.

I charged £6/5/0 for 50 tablets but the doctor sold tablets for £10 each. I had to give evidence and the doctor was given 12 years in gaol and when he was released the people from Treasury greeted him.

JIMMY MILNER

Back to Jimmy Milner, After I sold my business I did some relief work in various towns. I was relieving down in Echuca when a fellow came in for a prescription for a John Nicholson. I said, "Strike me pink you don't look like my son!" and he said, "You don't look like my father."

Anyway we got talking and it turned out he had been sent there to do a special job for the RSL because so many Echuca district men had been POWs in Changi. I asked if he had known Jimmy Milner. He came to attention and said, "You mean Captain Milner. He was a wonderful bloke. He used to always get extra food and stuff for the prisoners."

Seems that when working on the railway they came across this yellow clay. Jimmy Milner made tablets out of it that he sold to the Japanese as Atebrin to treat malaria and with the extra money that he got he was able to get extra food for those under his command. When he couldn't get the yellow clay, he stole flour from the Japanese officers kitchen. He'd wrap it in paper and sell that as Bex Powders to the Jap guards too.

MOVING LOCATIONS

Changing demographics and the need to position the business better brought about a move

from Tribune Street to the Village Shopping Centre in the 1960s and later to the corner of Kiewa and Englehardt Streets.

RETIREMENT

I sold the business in 1988, but continued to do locum work in the Riverina and NE Victoria until 1994 when ill health caused me to finally call it quits. I now use my time doing charity work for Lutheran Aged Care, playing croquet and learning to master my computer.

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ALBURY'S TIME BALL

By Joe Wooding

From time immemorial, mankind has evolved around the seasons and the time of day. Early Albury folk had clocks and watches but only arguments as to the correct time. Gleaned from the *Border Post* and the *Albury Banner* are excerpts of what was done to provide Albury's first standard of time.

November 29 1856

A Town Clock - Now as we have no recognized authority in Albury in matters of time, we consider the example of the people of Beechworth might be most advantageously followed by our fellow citizens. As the discrepancies between the watches and clocks of the Albury folks are very great, a sundial would form a great acquisition to the town, and might perhaps be found more useful - because more reliable, than a clock.

February 19 1859

One of the most urgent wants of our town and one which can be most easily supplied, is the necessity for establishing some public record of the 'time of day'.

The variation in the different ideas of time is at least half an hour and hence it is customary at every public meeting or private appointment in Albury, to give half an hour's grace. The waste of time thus produced is considerable, and the inconvenience caused in cases where punctuality is necessary, such as the sitting of courts &c., is most serious. Our neighbours in Beechworth purchased a town clock long ago, the denizens of the little town of Gundagai have provided themselves with a time gun, and it is high time the Alburyites took a similar step. A clock is liable to get out of order; a sun-dial is a reliable but a silent monitor. We prefer a time gun if it can be fired by the electric telegraph, punctually at one o'clock. A gun can be heard all over the town, and people hearing the discharge, would be naturally inclined to compare their clocks with the time thus heralded. A sufficient sum to purchase a gun could be raised amongst our men of business in half an hour; our guinea is ready whenever it may be called for.

February 9 1861

Town Clock - The town clock is much required. Should not the Council see to this? They hold the public funds, and it would save a great waste of their own valuable time, as well as that of the ratepayers, if they would vote from £50 to £100 for a good clock.

April 6 1861

Time Ball - A public subscription has been opened for the construction of Albury's time ball which will be placed at the corner of the Telegraph Office.

May 1 1861

Time Ball - The wood for erecting the flagstaff of the time ball has been procured and Mr Owen has already commenced its construction.

July 10 1861

The Albury Time Ball - That great log of rough Howlong pine that might have been seen lying in front of the new Telegraph Office for some time past, having not been polished after the similitude of a main mast, was, on Saturday last, hoisted into its perpendicular resting place. The work of putting it in position was conducted by the contractor, Mr Robert Owen, who was assisted in his task by the combined intelligence of a lot of townsfolk who were present to witness the operation. Our Police Magistrate, too, had a finger in the pie, and seemed to enjoy what was going on, giving orders with the greatest sangfroid, and with the air of one accustomed to quarter-deck life, sayings, and doings. A few days, we believe, will see the affair complete in all its arrangements, and we hope it will prove a complete success in regulating the time of this town, and do away with that perfect Babel of timepieces which has reigned in Albury for so long a time. We hope our friends the jewellers will lose nothing by this addition to our town improvements.

July 17 1861

Time Ball - This affair is now properly fixed in front of the new Albury Telegraph Office unit Mr Kraegen expects to commence dropping the ball precisely at 1 o'clock before the end of the present week.

[Dr Andrews' *History of Albury* informs us that the Council was to provide £20 for the installation, but only provided £10 with Mr Kraegen having to find the balance.]

July 20 1861

Time Ball - This affair is now in working order. It dropped on Thursday for the first time, and will continue to do so now regularly every day. It will be hoisted at five minutes before one, and fall precisely at that hour. The ball is between three and four feet in diameter, formed of

canvas stretched on a wooden frame, and painted in alternate stripes of black and white. It is a conspicuous object, and can be seen from all parts of the town, except where some specially tall buildings obstruct the view.

July 20 1861

Time Ball- *Un fait accompli. A good many persons were witness (watches in hand) of its first operation last Thursday and may be considered an ornament to the town.*

January 25 1864

The time ball at the Albury Telegraph Office is now once more in working order, thanks to the recent visit of Mr Cracknell, and is lowered as formerly precisely at 1 o'clock.

[The Telegraph Office in 1861 was located on the corner of Dean & Kiewa Streets where the Post Office now stands. A new Telegraph Office was built east of the Court House, the foundation stone for which was laid by Mr Kraegen on 31 October 1867.

It is not clear for how long the time ball operated, but the following report shows it was moved to the new building.]

January 4 1871

Time Ball - "Time is Made for Slaves". *As a remedy for the present confusion of time, we would suggest that the time ball at the rear of the Telegraph Office be raised daily at 1 o'clock pm Albury mean time. Should any difficulty arise from the gear being out of order, or is no one's business in particular to look after it, a representation in the proper quarter would no doubt, have a beneficial effect.*

[Mr C W E Kraegen died of thirst during construction of the Overland Telegraph Line through South Australia in 1872.]

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE JOURNALS

By John Craig

Links 'n' Chains: Liverpool GS Journal, May 2009.

- Sydney's last convict ship, by Phillip Greeves;
- Redcoats on the North Coast (continued from Feb Journal).

Wagga Wagga HS Newsletter, April/May 2009.

- First banks in Wagga Pt 3.

History: RAHS Magazine, June 2009.

- The Donnithornes of Camperdown Lodge, Pt 1;
- Calendar of events Jul/Aug 2009.

RAHS Journal, June 2009.

- Stories and Things: the role of the local historical society;
 - The Bradfield Scheme: mirage of the inland sea.
- Heritage: Newsletter of NSW Heritage Council, Autumn 2009.*
- State Register, Thematic listings Program 2009-2010.

WHAT ARE YOU RESEARCHING?

There is nothing more disappointing than to get half-way through your research only to discover someone

else has been doing the same work. On the other hand there is nothing more helpful than to have someone give you some information relevant to your interest that they came across while doing research of their own. Both are good reasons for letting other members know what you are interested in.

Joe Wooding, for example, is researching:

- Albury's Public Hospitals;
 - Public baths from first mention in 1856;
 - the story of Time in Albury;
 - the Post Offices in Albury;
 - the Albury Sale Yards, and
 - Bridges in Albury—not just the well known ones.
- Chris McQuellin is keen to know what other members are researching.

ANSWER TO QUESTION OF THE MONTH

For whom was Dellacourt named?

Dellacourt and Clarrie's Cafe at Lutheran Aged Care in Albury are named for Della (nee Schulz) and Clarrie Hamdorf who moved to Albury in 1960 after farming at Burrumbuttock. Mr Hamdorf was one of those credited with starting Lutheran Age Care from the time it was first mooted in the late 1950s, and he was said to have set the direction of aged care in Albury Wodonga. The first building was the former Malcolm home in Riverview Terrace, overlooking the Botanic Gardens and swimming pool, before the complex started in West Albury. Mr and Mrs Hamdorf were both completely involved in the development and running of the home, giving generously of time and money, as Clarrie did the maintenance, and took devotions each morning.

They were known as gardeners from their time on the property at Burrumbuttock and continued their interest at their Albury homes, winning annual garden competitions which they later judged. They were members of the Albury Horticultural Society, Albury Show Society, and St Luke's Church. After Della died in 1990 Clarrie moved to Lutheran Aged Care, and later to the nursing home, before his death in 1997.

WODONGA HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

Next meeting: Tuesday 4 August 7.30 p.m. at Conways Function Centre, 19 South Street Wodonga.

Marie Elliott will show a 20 minute DVD of the Bonegilla Hall.

Also new publication *Wodonga Memories No 4* now available; 270 pages crammed with miscellaneous local history. It sells for \$20. PO Box 829 Wodonga 3689.

REMINDER ABOUT THE AUGUST MEETING

The August meeting is to be a members meeting.

A&DHS Members are encouraged to relate a short story of 5-10 minutes on subjects of their choice.

Supper will be provided following the meeting.

Please advise Helen Livsey or Chris McQuellin if you would like to share a story on your research or family history.