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John Dempsey Hunter

## Next Meeting

Wednesday, December 09, 2020  
7.30 pm, Commercial Club

**Topic:** Francisco Romero,  
builder of Smollett St bridge.

**Speaker:** Geoff Romero

Also 'Show & Tell'

**ALBURY LIBRARY MUSEUM**  
**'Earth Canvas'**  
**Until February 7, 2021**

Page 2 John D Hunter

Page 4 Light Horse Museum

Page 6 Rotary's War & Peace

Page 9 149 Years Ago

Page 10 Postcard Story

## REPORT ON NOVEMBER MEETING (11.11.2020)

Our November meeting fell on Remembrance Day, 102 years since the signing of the Armistice to end World War I. So that was the theme of the meeting, with Chris McQuellin relating the story of Albury man, John Hunter, shot down and then confined to military prison for the remainder of World War II. Doug Hunter continued the theme with an outline of the history of the Light Horse Museum, the 8<sup>th</sup> /13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles Regimental Collection.

The theme continues throughout this edition of the Society Bulletin, with most of the articles relating to the impact and memories of both World Wars, at the front and at home.

Next month Geoff Romero will be telling us about his ancestor, Francisco Romero, how and why he came to Albury from the other side of the world, and his role in building the steel arched Smollett St bridge and other structures in the district. In addition we have our usual December 'Show & Tell' where members are invited to bring along an item of interest (eg a physical object or photograph) with a short account of the significance of the object.

As highlighted at our November meeting, our committee has prepared a submission outlining our agreed position in relation to the review of Albury's Cultural Precinct Plan. This precinct plays a huge role in the cultural and social life of our city. The review is being coordinated by consultants. The timetable is:

1. Site analysis and survey input by late November;
2. A draft plan prepared with the opportunity to provide feedback, January 2021;
3. Public exhibition of the draft plan, March 2021;
4. Final Master Plan released in April 2021.

John Dempsey Hunter was just a 22 year old young man originally from Englehardt Street in Albury when he enlisted in the RAAF in November of 1940. He was described as being 5 foot 7 with a medium complexion, hazel eyes and with a freckled face.

The Hunter family were partners in the Hunter and Stelling business known as The Dependable Store at 587 Dean Street and lived in Englehardt Street.

Hunter enlisted at the No 1 Recruiting Centre in Melbourne on November 8 1940. Little did he realise at this time that his role in the RAAF would change greatly during the course of the war.

He commenced his training at the Initial Training School at Sommers in Victoria. Following this basic training period, John Hunter was then sent to No 1ED (Embarkation Depot) at Ascot Vale in Melbourne on February 1 1941 because he had been assigned to the Middle East Pool for the RAAF the previous December.

In April 1940 the Rhodesian Air Force Training Scheme and the Empire Air Training Scheme really began. John Hunter was part of this programme. He was to be part of the BNAF (British North Africa Force) with 14 Squadron RAF.

From his war record: It was Friday July 23 1943 and he and his crew in Martin Marauder FK 176 took off from Prontville Tunisia at 11.47 am on a shipping reconnaissance mission around Corsica and the Italian mainland – unfortunately 14 Squadron RAF base did not hear from the aircraft again.

He was to later write – “On patrol and attacked by ten twin engine aircraft due west of Rogliano (Corsica). Tried three times to get between Italy and Corsica on line of duty. Attacked three times by five aircraft. Third time engines failed. Ditched and was picked up 24 hours later by a DO 24 seaplane. Landed Marsailles in France.”



John Hunter was flying ‘Tiger Moths’ similar to this during training in Rhodesia, the planes serviced by Rhodesian Air Askari Corp.

Crew of Martin Marauder FK 176: 23/7/1943:

F/Sgt Hunter John D	A/400800	1 <sup>st</sup> Pilot
W/O John L A C	RAF 623529	2 <sup>nd</sup> Pilot
F/O Egan Richard	A/407525	Navigator
W/O Murphy Laurance	A/401627	WO/AG/Wireless operator
W/O Stephens Maxwell F	A/406664	WO/AG/Turret Gunner
W/O Jackson	RAF 1432977	AG/Tail Gunner

Notes on W/O Murphy L M 401627 – Whilst the aircraft was sinking, finding the dinghy securely fastened in its container inside the aircraft, dived into the plane and released it. The aircraft sank as the dinghy was released. W/O Murphy through this act, definitely saved every member of the crew from possible drowning. Three members of the crew found their Mae West life vests unserviceable due to the crash landing. And as Captain of the aircraft, highly recommend his (Murphy’s) act as a very brave one.



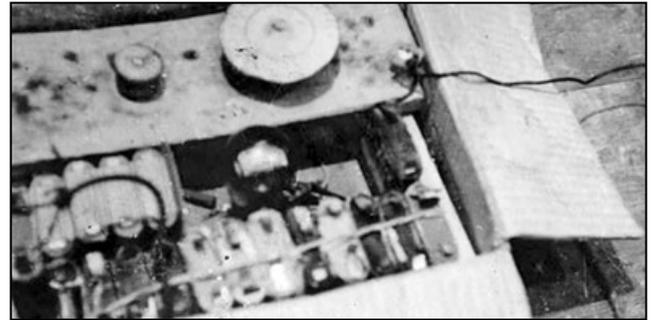
The Marauder had landed in the sea off the NW tip of Corsica some fifty kilometres from land.

As the aircraft had crashed without radioing its position, recovery of the crew was left to the axis powers. 24 hours after the crash landing, the crew was picked up by a Dornier flying boat. The captured crew was then delivered to Marseilles in southern France and treated for minor injuries before eventual transfer to Stalag IV B.

John Hunter and his crew were treated at the Air Sea Rescue Hospital at Marseilles where he was to spend some days in late July 1943. The crew was then to spend sixteen days at the Dulag Luft before the final transfer to Stalag IV B. The camp was located approximately fifty kilometres north of Dresden in the eastern section of Germany. The camp covered about 30 hectares.

Jack Hunter's role as a prisoner was to change him. After arriving at the POW camp in August 1943, he was posted as a camp barrack commander of some 200 men. This time was the period the POW team in the RAF part of the camp were trying to build a radio receiver to enable BBC news to be given to the men. There were some 1800 aircrew from the RAF, RAAF, RCAF, RNZAF and SAAF in Stalag IV B. The camp also included men from many allied countries including some 8000 Americans.

The role for John Hunter was challenging as he had a mind to escape but was also conscious of his role as barracks commander. By Christmas 1943 he was the Officer in charge responsible for the management of the completed news radio. It was important to keep the location secret and the radio was moved between huts and eventually located under brick flooring. Initially the aerial was made up by wire slung in a barrack roof above the latrine. Because of security the radio was later moved to Hunter's barracks in March 1944.



A radio similar to the Stalag IV B radio

The German authorities were aware of a radio but despite serious efforts to discover it, the radio was never found.

John Hunter had one or two narrow escapes. Once, when moving the radio in an ordinary suitcase, the lid fell open leaving him trailing headphones and wires, fortunately without notice from the guards. In a report written by WO Frederick E Bamberger RAF, who was the hut commander in 24A, he says in part "Johnny Hunter was a familiar figure to all in the RAF huts, eagerly awaited after each roll call, in his dash from hut to hut to read the latest BBC news. On many occasions he had to return to his own hut after curfew – with the risk of being at the wrong end of a bullet."

During 1945 Flying Officer John Hunter was to become the Commanding Officer of the RAF camp of some 1800 to 2000 men. The work of keeping up morale and internal discipline was a daily challenge. The detainees knew the war front was getting closer with the Russians heading west and the Allies east. Rations were getting short and there were serious cuts to the Red Cross food parcels by September 1944. This was due partly to the breakdown of the German rail system.

As the Russian army approached Stalag IV B, on the April 13 1945, the German camp authorities handed over control of the interior discipline to the British Officers. The living conditions were deplorable. The men were living on a small ration of potatoes and turnip soup with some bread four times a week. There was no coal for heating or cooking. There were still 18,000 POWs in the camp made up of 10,000 Anglo American forces, several thousand Russian, 1500 French and numbers of Dutch, Polish, Serbian and Italian servicemen.

At 00.15 am on the April 23, with the Russian army in close proximity, the German camp Commandant informed the British that the guards were retreating from the camp. Immediate steps were taken to guard the food supplies. The Russian Army was at the gates at 7.30 am.

The challenge now was what to do with all these men now the German guards were gone – the RAF men had to regain control of the potato crop where some 800 men were looting trying to find something to eat.

The RAF Officers and NCO's worked hard to manage the situation before the Russians could assist the camp management in any way. As the Officer in charge of the RAF section, John Hunter had to deal with the looting, reinsert a level of discipline, clean up the camp as well as handling the problem of the broken down toilets. The system of cess pools had to be regularly pumped out – not everyone's idea of fun. The pumps had broken down. The water and lighting system had also failed and generally deplorably conditions ensued.

Fortunately, with the cooperation of the British Army contingent, guarding the compound was reinstated and a considerable increase in rations was able to be made. By May 1, the RAF and the American POW commander were sending Officer level patrols to the west in order to contact allied lines in order to inform them of the camp and the enduring conditions.

It was early May before Russian sentries started to take responsibility for camp security. Local German military were by then being rounded up and interned in their own camp.

Following eventual release from the POW camps and returning to England, Australians were to report to No 11 RAAF Personnel Receiving and Despatch Centre (PRDC), which occupied both the Grand and Metropole Hotels in Brighton, Sussex.

Brighton had been set up to receive the large numbers of ex-Prisoners of War, now flooding back into the UK for rehabilitation and debriefing. Each man was issued a new uniform on arrival, and then spent the

following weeks being questioned at length about his experiences as a prisoner of war. However, much was also done to make the men feel at home and to keep them occupied.

John Hunter returned to Australia and disembarked in Sydney on September 9 1945.

A family history discussion recorded that he did not talk about his life during WWII. This was not uncommon amongst returned servicemen hence this story has gone unknown.

The end of the war was time for another life, and yes, in hardware. Lest we Forget.

## LIGHT HORSE MUSEUM

Doug Hunter

Museums are one of the means of recording and preserving history. They also become history as their own story progresses: their successes and their failures.

Chris McQuellin's story of Johnny Hunter and his World War Two experience reflects successes and failures of a museum, the 8<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles Regimental Collection, or as it was later known the Light Horse Museum.

Our success was in preserving the account of Johnny Hunter's POW experience and our failure is not being able to find the radio at the heart of the story. What happened?

The museum was established in the early 1980s when an unused married quarter building at the Albury Drill Hall in Victoria Street became available. The Drill Hall had been in existence since 1900 and was home to a number of military units as well as being the recruiting depot during World War One and accommodating base units during World War Two. Additional buildings including three married quarters had been added over the years.

The museum was the brainchild of Colonel John Neale who gathered a group of volunteers and began work on boxes of photographs, documents, and objects in a storeroom. This material came from a variety of sources, some from the three antecedent light horse regiments 8<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> which had existed in north-east and eastern Victoria since



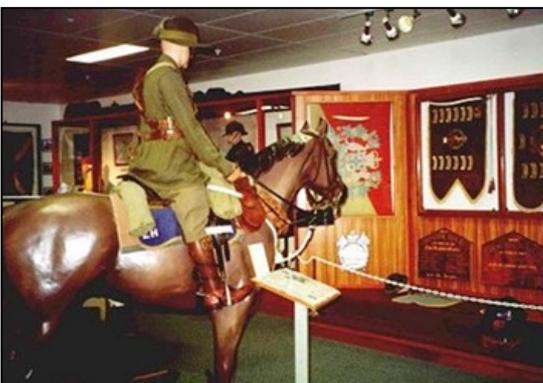
Unused Drill Hall, Victoria St Albury

Federation; some from the artillery battery which had met at the Drill Hall between 1903 and 1940, some from the NSW colonial infantry which was formed in Albury in 1867, and items reflecting the story of the 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles during its 50 year occupancy. Then there were items which were handed to the museum because there was nowhere else for them to go.

This first museum operated successfully hosting ex-service associations, visitors and school groups. It continued to be a repository for items of military interest from the district. The Hunter papers and radio are examples of objects handed to the museum. In keeping with many 'folk' museums run by volunteers, little documentation was maintained. Papers were filed and objects placed on display. Their fuller story and the ability to recognise their significance tended to be held in the heads of the volunteer staff.

In 2000, the Department of Defence vacated the Victoria Street property and the regiment relocated to North Bandiana. The museum packed and went with it. At North Bandiana the volunteers set about building a new museum, but they were not all the same volunteers who had built and operated the first museum, age had wearied some and as old soldiers do they faded away. And with them went the information stored in their heads.

The new museum was built and flourished, again hosting visitors, tour groups and social clubs. Then terrorism raised its ugly head and defence bases became much more difficult for the public to enter.



Top: Horseman and Honour Roll  
Bottom: Uniforms  
(Building 105 Nth Bandiana)

During this period, the Army had recognised the value of the materials held by regimental collections such as 8/13 VMR and hosted training sessions to improve the skills in formulating collection policy, cataloguing and conservation. At the 8/13 VMR Museum a team set about the rather daunting task of cataloguing the 6000+ items in the collection. A computer was purchased, and a catalogue program designed and installed. Fortuitously the catalogue was completed at the end of 2008 although only some items had been tagged. While they were visible in a display case this was not a major concern. However, it was when circumstances changed suddenly.

Was the Hunter radio on display? We don't know; but it seems unlikely because it does not appear on the 2008 catalogue. Also, in the process of the move and laying the new exhibition, the significance of the radio might not have been recognised as anything more than a crystal set or school project which had somehow come into the collection but now appeared to be of no value. We don't know.

Early in 2009, the 1942 era building housing the museum was found to be structurally unsafe. An immediate evacuation was ordered. So, there was a hurried and somewhat chaotic effort to empty display cases into boxes and move them to a storage area. It was hard hats, high-vis jackets, and observers watching for signs of falling roof timbers.

Storage was provided in the basement of the former RAEME Officers' Mess building at North Bandiana and the team set about sorting the 200 odd boxes and recording new locations in our catalogue. Item entries had to change from case 23 to box 166 and so on. If the item had been tagged then that process was not difficult however 100s of items had to be identified, tagged and reconciled with the catalogue. That done, there remained many items catalogued but not physically located. It took years to establish order out of the chaos.

Ironically, with the collection in storage the museum was perfectly placed to respond to invitations to install temporary displays in venues around the district. For simplicity, the term Light Horse Museum became commonly used to refer to the organization. We were able to collaborate with Albury LibraryMuseum in staging World War One commemoration exhibitions and with Wodonga Council on similar occasions.

The Albury LibraryMuseum Travelling Exhibition took our objects to Corowa, Culcairn, Henty and Holbrook. Also, we set up temporary displays at Albury SS&A Club, Legacy House, Wodonga Library, Wodonga RSL, Hume Veterans' Centre, and Lavington Library.

Ironically, as I say, in that five-year period more people viewed objects from our collection than had ever seen them when they were on display in our museum.

Things continue to change however: our tenure in our store at Bandiana became uncertain. Various options for a museum in the Albury-Wodonga area have been to no avail. We investigated the Turks Head, located next to Noreuil Park, land next to Wodonga RSL and space at Albury Railway Station but none was feasible. We needed a large space and substantial funding, and our declining volunteer numbers meant we would struggle to be able to maintain reasonable opening hours. So the decision was made to relocate the collection to Simpson Barracks, Melbourne, the home of our parent regiment 4<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> Prince of Wales' Light Horse where a space of 150 square metres was available. Not ideal, but better than losing the collection.

All we had to do was furnish the space and lay the display. What could be simpler, it is the third museum we have built, but this time our volunteers are fewer and are twenty years older and the site is four hours' drive away. During 2019 we were able to complete Phase One of the museum and have it opened on 8 December 2019.

Plans were in place to have Phase Two completed by June 2020, but COVID-19 threw that schedule into disarray. We have finally been able to return to work at Bandiana and plan to have everything ready for installation sometime early in 2021.

With the passing of time has come vast changes in museum policy and design, and the introduction of technology especially computers and the web.

In refining policy, it was obvious that many items we held were not relevant to our core interest of light horse and armoured corps, so efforts have been made to transfer items to other more relevant institutions such as Wangaratta RSL, Wodonga Historical Society, Urana Museum, Federation Museum Corowa, Burke Museum



World War I Exhibition 'The Trumpet Calls'  
Albury LibraryMuseum, 2015

Beechworth, Hay War Memorial High School Museum and Albury Library Museum. Objects of a more general nature are being passed to the Army Heritage Repository located at South Bandiana where they can be offered to other institutions wishing to fill gaps.

The advent of the web has allowed us to connect with Victorian Collections, an online platform managed by Museums Australia (Victoria) in partnership with Museums Victoria. Hundreds of smaller museums and collections throughout Victoria have been able to digitise their collections and make them available to the world. Victorian Collections is linked to Trove. Currently 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles Regimental Collection has 1100 entries posted on the web with photographs and information about the objects.

So going back to where this all began: failures and successes; the loss of the radio yet the preservation of the document which gave us the story; builds and rebuilds; locations and relocations; temporary exhibitions; collaboration with other institutions; policy revisions and offers to other museums; aging volunteers and loss of knowledge; websites and digitisation. This is the history of a local museum fading from the local scene but proud of its contribution to the preservation and exposure of the military history of Albury and the North-east.

The 8/13 Victorian Mounted Rifles website can be found at <https://www.813vmr.org/>. This gives a link to the digital catalogue at Victorian Collections.

## ROTARY'S WAR AND PEACE

Bruce Pennay

*A dozen ways in which newspaper reports of Rotary meetings in the 1940s help in developing understandings of the place, the times and an influential service club.*

### Introduction

Critics of the elitist nature of Rotary mocked Club members with the jibe that while the nation went to war between 1939 and 1945, Rotarians went to lunch. And they did. Through and beyond the war, members of the Rotary Club of Albury, met weekly at Mates Lounge to plan their vocational, international and community service activities – and to hear an inspiring speaker.

The *Border Morning Mail* gave Rotary special regard, for the organisation was comprised of the leading members of the community. It deemed their meetings newsworthy and often sent a journalist to prepare a detailed report, especially if the speaker was a distinguished visitor. Through the 1940s, it regularly reported how Rotary went to lunch with speakers urging the town's leaders and townspeople to consider the ways Australia was being defended and how best to prepare for the peace.

Reports of Rotary meeting engagements provided good publicity for those who wanted to sway public opinion. Visiting professors, bishops, politicians, high ranking military officers, as well as the local influential, accepted invitations to speak at Club meetings. Within a 20-minute lunch time talk to the town's influential men, they pushed ideas which confirmed or challenged the accepted wisdom of the day.

**1 Providing community service on the home front.** Rotary went to lunch, but it also rolled up its sleeves to undertaken community services. The newspaper reported these activities as they occurred, separately from the meetings. It reported on how Rotary joined other volunteer groups in raising funds for troop comforts. Rotary helped with a Popular Girl, an Ugly Man and a Queen of Albury competition. It held Mock Courts in Dean Square, at which it fined passing citizens for what it deemed misdemeanours. It was pleased to have helped raise some of the £61.5k which the local community donated to patriotic purposes.

When Albury and Wodonga became garrison towns, public-spirited townspeople were called upon to provide facilities for those on leave. Rotary members helped build an initial rest room next to the Mechanics Institute in Dean Square for service men. A measure of the popularity of the rest room facility came over the Victory in Pacific holidays, when it distributed 100 dozen pies. In 1942 when Albury prepared for possible air attacks, Rotarians were urged to not just raise money, but also to help more directly with the war effort. They were asked to become wardens, responsible for a neighbourhood. They were asked to join the Volunteer Air Post at Billson Park to scan the skies for Japanese aircraft.



A Rest Room for Soldiers  
[*Border Morning Mail*, 15 April 1940]

**2 Understanding the war.** Not long after war broke out Rotary had a special session to explain the war to the business girls its members employed. It was also intent

on explaining the war to itself. Dr LS Woods had given the Club the favourable impressions he had formed on a trip to Germany before the war. After the war he returned to the lectern to detail concentration camp atrocities. Pastor Muetzelfeldt explained his first-hand experience of the totalitarian nature of Nazi Germany. Another speaker anticipated the need to understand the religious nature of the Japanese approach to war. The district brigadier urged people to beware of subversive activities – not sabotage, but industrial actions that would undermine the war effort. A visiting journalist explained the Malayan campaign shortly after the fall of Singapore. Rotarians themselves prepared updated analysis of the war in the Pacific. Post-war, Rotary heard about the task of rehabilitating those who had been in war time service. It supported the work of the Fathers' Association. It helped in the observance of Anzac Day by providing transport for veterans who required it.

**3 Planning for peace.** Rotary heard directly from Lloyd Ross, one of the appointed Post-war Reconstruction Commissioners, about the plans the Commonwealth was developing in conjunction with the states. There were to be special Industry, Housing and Rural Reconstruction Commission gathering evidence and then reporting recommendations on needs in those crucial areas. During the war Professor MacDonald Holmes, from the University of Sydney, and after the war Roy Collings, Albury's Town Clerk, explained to the Club the rationale and ambition of developing a Murray Valley region. Jack Sarvaas, Albury's town engineer, was invited in 1944 to tell why Albury should have a town plan.

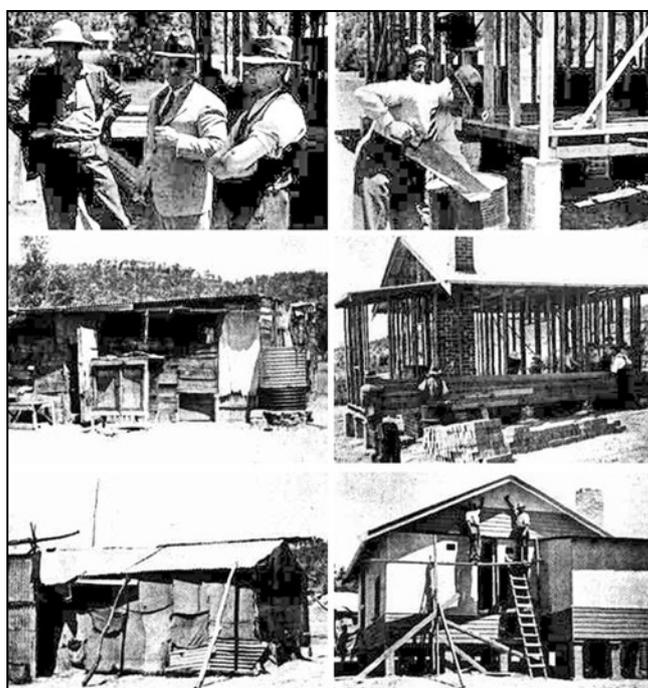
**4 Housing everybody.** Before the Second World War the Club's philanthropic work was usually aimed at helping the hospital and the orphanage. However, Rotary members from the building trade helped form substantial dwelling structures at Happy Valley, where nearly twenty families made homeless during the depression, lived in crude shacks. The shortage in houses became worse during and after the war, because building materials were scarce. Alexander Mair, the local member who had been Premier, told Rotary how he worried about government entering the housing markets. Professor Wilkinson, a member of the Commonwealth Housing Commission, explained how government intervention was limited to social housing for the most needy.

**5 Debating Government intervention in the economy.** Rotary was apolitical, but arranged well reported special meetings for Club members to debate the 14 Powers Referendum in 1944 on whether or not the Commonwealth should retain the controls it had assumed over jobs and housing, primary production and social welfare for five years after the war.

**6 Caring for the natural environment.** Jocelyn Henderson used a Rotary meeting to press her arguments for community forests. She was intent on conserving woodlands from Nail Can Hill through to Jindera. The Club picked up on her advocacy for preserving trees on Eastern Hill and formed a park overlooking Dean Street.

**7 Supporting the young.** The Rotary Club took a keen interest in helping youth define and realise vocational ambitions. It built up a close association with Albury High School. It heard twice from Bishop Burgmann speaking on how to improve schools and once from a Teachers Federation representative more directly on how to improve schools. Rotary supported country children going to sea-side camps. It looked at several sites to establish a river-side youth camp, before settling on a Youth Chalet at Hume Weir.

**8 Developing the rural district.** In keeping with Albury's place as a rural service centre, Club members explained developments in the pastoral and agricultural industries, focusing at different lunch-time meetings on the dairy, beef, wheat, and wool industries. Monsieur Frere, from St Hilaire, spoke about the wine industry. During the war, speakers complained about the dearth of rural labour. After the war, members heard from AA Rogers, one of the local wool brokers, that Albury was selling 15 per cent of Australia's wool. The prospects of the wool trade were very good indeed. Albury was about to mount the sheep's back more surely than ever before.



Comparisons in old and new homes, Happy Valley on Albury Common [BMM, 08 Nov 1938]

**9 Civilising the Community.** Rotary embraced the post-war ideal of enriching community life with cultural facilities. At a time when the Dobell painting of Joshua Smith, and James Joyce novel, *Ulysees* caused controversy, Rotary had speakers explaining the power of art and literature – and the need for a gallery and a library. It also heard about the need for a museum and the achievements of the local eisteddfod. Rotary members heard how life in Albury was to be more civilised after the war.

**10 Advancing international understanding.** Post-war Sir Thomas Blamey told the Club about the need to retain a military capacity. At least two other speakers warned that the peace was precarious and another war likely. CS Yarwood, a teacher at Albury High School, explained the bogey of Communism. Hopes were expressed that the Atomic Bomb might open prospects of nuclear energy. Speakers urged the Club to consider the plight of war refugees. Rotary heard about the hungry world and India's need for food. The Club joined in the local campaigns to collect food for Britain. It helped provide clothing for the impoverished displaced persons arriving at the Bonegilla Reception Centre. The Club seemed to heed the calls to live with the world's common humanity. It had a member of the CWA remind members that the treatment of Aborigines in Australia was a blot upon the nation.

**11 Club Membership.** The idea that a job was a vocation was central to Rotary. Within the mindsets of the time, jobs were life-long callings. Membership was by invitation and was restricted to one representative of each vocation. There was to be only one member for every calling. Rotary wanted community leaders, the 'directing force behind a business'. At meetings and in work on Club projects, members had the opportunity to develop acquaintance beyond their own particular vocational field. Rotary fellowship was cemented by the routine of regular meetings, which all members were obliged to attend.

Not surprisingly, in Albury the Club had a representative drawn from each of the wool marketing, wheat processing, beef production, and building industries. Members included wholesalers, retailers, and professional men, representing medicine, health, law and education. By 1945 it had expanded from 20 to 40 members, as the classifications became more refined. So, for example, the Club found room not only for the District Inspector of Schools, but also a representative of independent schools, high schools and primary schools.

Rotary was discriminatory. Within the gender bind of the mid-twentieth century, Rotarians had wives, who were invited to special ladies' nights, and Rotarians had business girls at their places of work. Through the 1940s men were regarded as the primary breadwinners. The Club's business was men's business. And it was privileged men's business involving only community 'leaders', thus illustrative of the way social life, here and elsewhere, was stratified.

## **12 Conclusion**

Newspaper reports of the meetings of the Rotary Club of Albury may or may not have sparked family dinner table discussions of the kind Jim Eames remembers in his memoir of his undertaker father at Holbrook. They did show the general public the kinds of ideas being discussed by men regarded as leaders in their vocational fields. They helped people keep abreast with current developments that seemed to have some relevance to their own lives. The Club meetings were one of the principal battle grounds in the contest of ideas about the kind of place Australia (and Albury) was and might become after the war. In this sense the Rotary Club of Albury was one of the most influential of Albury's many volunteer organisations in the 1940s.

## **Postscript**

Volunteer organisations have always played important roles in community life. Indeed, there are calculations today that 6 million people willingly give unpaid help, in the form of time, service or skills, through an organisation or group. The value of their volunteer work to the national economy is estimated at \$14.6 billion per year. As a nation we celebrate volunteerism with a National Volunteer Week. Recent scholarship has shown that volunteering is cyclical. Those in the 35-44 age group with dependent children undertake the most volunteer hours and volunteering is most common among parents in couple relationships with dependent children aged 5-17 years. With the ageing population, older volunteers have become increasingly important and valuable volunteers. <https://theconversation.com/ten-things-you-should-know-about-volunteerings-immeasurable-value-41169>

**RUSSELL DRYSDALE'S PAINTING** 'Going to the Pictures' referred to in our November Bulletin has sold. Deutscher and Hackett, the art dealers, realised \$3 million for the sale, which included buyer's premium and GST. The previous highest price for a Drysdale painting was \$2.4 million for 'Grandma's Sunday Walk' in 2017. Members are advised to keep any paintings they may have under lock and key or to sell now to compensate for any income loss COVID has caused.

Now this may sound like a silly date but the last couple of articles from me have come from the *Border Morning Mail*, currently the last of our Albury newspapers on Trove. Our first newspaper on Trove is from August 5, 1871, the *Albury Banner & Wodonga Express*.



The *Banner* had four editions for November, each of six pages. So only a few hours research compared with the *Border Morning Mail* 1945, six days a week with six to eight pages.

Construction of the wharf at the Hovell Tree park commenced in January and a crane was installed there in November. That year Albury had large flooding with the Murray reaching 16 feet (4.87 m).

Aldermen at a Municipal Council meeting included George Day, Kenneth McLennan, Lewis Jones, W N Edmondson, James Liddle, Lewis Solomon and Luke Gulson.

The *Banner's* front page was all advertisements so here are a few: two flour mills, Fanny Ceres Mill run by the Hayes Brothers and Hume Mill run by John Burrows; William Davidson saddlery; Samuel Mudge Insurance & Assurance; solicitors included S F Blackmore Dean St, G C Thorold Kiewa St and Joseph Dwyer at the new Day building Dean St; Dr Colbert dentist; W J (Coffin) Jones furniture and hardware store also sold groceries and harvesting equipment; Albury Port Agent Lewis Solomon, auctioneer & commission agent; S Lane hairdresser Townsend St; Hume Drug store run by John Blackie Townsend St; attending magistrates James T Fallon JP and James Hayes JP; T H Mate's store Townsend St; John Lapraik veterinary surgeon Kiewa St; postmaster Thomas H Stone; John A Kennedy pound keeper; Albury Portrait Gallery opening in a few days next to Mates Townsend St; Alex Frew & Co carpenters and builders; F A Selle furniture and undertaker; G Hunter hardware supplier. The big retailers are T H Mate, Downie Brothers of Kiewa St and Border City Stores.

The story of the month related to 'Border Customs Duty.' A committee was formed with Riverina towns bonding together to ensure that customs duty would not be set up again. Wagga and Deniliquin mayors promised co-operation. Deniliquin later mentioned it was in favour of annexation to Victoria. A petition was gathered with over a thousand signatures. James Fallon MLA was in Melbourne but would be in Sydney for the vote. T H Mate wrote letters to parliamentarians and Mr A Cass collected signatures from the outer reaches of the Southern Riverina. The question of duty was put to one parliamentarian who said "it was not his to answer," he put it on the Colonial Secretary who said there had been "no communication on the matter" and the vote was deferred to November 23. The petition was delivered in haste. Government received the petition but to delay it, ordered it be printed rather than accepting the hand written article. A vote was taken at 1.00 am of November 24: 23 to 22 votes in favour of reintroducing duties.

The *Cumberoona* steamer made its fastest trip from Albury to Echuca and back, leaving on the 24<sup>th</sup>, returning on November 30.

Mr Botterill's death had been announced about two years ago in previous editions, but he appears to be alive and well. He wishes to say "the notice, where ever it originated, was a mistake." The paper reports that "he has not shuffled off this mortal coil. He does not look like dislodging his partnership with the world yet ..."

Exciting news was received that gold was found at the Hawksview reef and looks promising.

World news: Chicago has been destroyed by fire with 100,000 people homeless.

Finally, the Albury Choral Society was formed on Wednesday November 23.



### Part of WWI Exhibition at Australian War Memorial (Photo: Howard Jones)

The text on the upper label reads: TRENCH FLAG (Copyright applied for throughout British Territory.) Send for this Flag, Card and Stick enclosed in this Box to a friend in the Trenches and ask him to fly it if only for one minute. If this flag is returned safely to the sender it will not only be of great value to the sender but of greater historical value.

THE FLAG SHOULD BE SENT BY REGISTERED POST. Text on the lower tab: The Union Jack Flag attached to this card and stick was flown from the Allies' for Enemy's Trenches. In ... NOREUIL By ... Lieut W E Potts On (date) ... 2.4.17



**CATHY GOES TO CANBERRA** – a good Christmas gift for a person who likes to keep up-to-date with their history of Albury & District.

Published by Monash and available for \$30 from a bookstore near you.

**POSTCARD STORY – THE MYSTERIOUS MR BALTAYAN**

In the ephemera of the 8/13 VMR Regimental Museum are seven postcards stamped in red 'For Wounded' and 'Australian & New Zealanders May 1915 Cairo' circling a solid Maltese Cross. On the lower left hand of the postcard is printed 'Offered to the wounded/ with the compliments of/ M.K. BALTAYAN/ Post Card & Stamp Dealer/The New Egypt/10 Manakh Street/CAIRO.'

May 1915 is very specific. Many Australian and New Zealand soldiers wounded on Gallipoli were returned to the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Hospital in Heliopolis, just outside Cairo, and these cards are directed specifically to the Australian and New Zealand forces.

Who was Mr Baltayan? I can find only one other reference:

The Australian War Museum has several items from an AIF doctor including a photo wallet or envelope from The New Egypt M K Baltayan, 10 El-Manakh Street (opp Groppi's) Cairo. On the back of the wallet we are informed that Mr Baltayan specialises in Egyptian and Sudanese Stamps, Egypt Postcards, souvenir albums and water colour hand paintings.

Nowhere can I find more postcards, or more information about this dealer. I've searched museums and collections in Australia and New Zealand and corresponded with a photographer in Egypt who says Groppi's is still there in Manakh Street but no postcard dealer. *Jan Hunter*



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The Committee meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 3 pm at the Albury LibraryMuseum.

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