

February 2021

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## Next Meeting

Wednesday, February 10, 2021

7.30 pm, Commercial Club

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

**Speaker:** Geoff Romero

## ALBURY LIBRARY MUSEUM

Mars—until March 14

Call the Midwife—until  
March 21

Page 2 Francisco of the Sea

Page 5 Haydn Bunton,

cigarette cards, last Argus

Page 6 Tennis & Cricket clubs

Page 7 Camouflage netting,

H&H commemoration

Page 8 St Patrick's bell, Vic

Premier's history award



The caption reads:

THE CELEBRATED PIRATICAL SLAVER L'ANTONIO  
with others of the Black Craft lying in the Bonny River

## REPORT ON DECEMBER MEETING (09.12.2020)

Geoff Romero was our December guest speaker, relating Part I of the story of his ggg and gg grandfathers, both Francisco Romero. This part of the tale relates to what Geoff described as the “dark side” of his ancestry, the first Francisco’s involvement in the slave trade. Geoff will follow up in February with the local side of the story, the second Francisco, builder of the Smollett St bridge.

There were several presenters with interesting items to display and describe in our ‘Show & Tell’ session, from a football jumper worn by Albury’s own Haydn Bunton to WWII camouflage netmaking, a Hume and Hovell Centenary memento, Railway Tennis Club, Mate’s Timber Yard Cricket Club and more.

President Greg passed on the Society’s congratulations to Doug Hunter – the 8/13<sup>th</sup> Victorian Mounted Rifles Regimental Collection has recently won the Museums and Galleries Award for Excellence in Collections War Heritage category, 2020. Well done to volunteers Doug Hunter, Brian Gibson and Gordon Cole.

Members will recall that due to Covid restrictions, our 2020 Heritage Week ‘cemetery walk’ at the Albury Pioneer Cemetery was postponed in April, then again later in 2020. We have now re-scheduled the walk for the afternoon of Sunday April 18. This will be the first day of the Australian Heritage Festival 2021, the theme is ‘Our Heritage for the Future.’ The cemetery walk theme (from 2020) is ‘Distinguished, ordinary and forgotten women.’ More information in later Bulletins.

At our last meeting for 2020, members in attendance were issued with a members’ card. This card will get you a 10% discount at corporate sponsor, Citi Café in Olive St. Thanks to Jeff for this discount. Members receiving mailed Bulletins will find a card with this Bulletin. Those who get emailed Bulletins will receive a card at the next general meeting you attend. Please give our corporate sponsors your support.

Several years ago, a blueprint of the Smollett street bridge hung on the wall of the Engineer's department at Albury City Council. An acquaintance asked me if I was related to the builder whose name, Francisco Romero, appeared at the foot of the document. I had to say that I did not know but my curiosity was piqued so I set about finding out. He was my great, great grandfather. My daughter Linda helped me investigate the roots of our family and trace them back to Spain. Francisco who built the bridge was named after his father, also Francisco. To distinguish between the two "Franciscos" I called the one who built the bridge, "Francisco of the Bridge" and his father "Francisco of the Sea" because he followed a maritime career and became a master of a merchant ship.



Francisco of the Sea was born in 1791 on the Iberian coast at the edge of the Atlantic in Bouzas, a prosperous fishing village near the port of Vigo in the kingdom of Galicia, now part of Spain. He was born into a world dictated by the sea, a world of opportunity but also a world of peril and conflict. Only two years before, Paris saw the storming of the Bastille and the beginning of the French Revolution.

As a two-year-old boy Francisco could not have known that a short distance away in France the king, Louis XVI, had been executed. He did not know that Robespierre was unleashing the 'Reign of Terror' in which one hundred people a day were taken by cart to 'Madame Guillotine.' One hundred people beheaded every day for a year, until the people called a halt and Robespierre himself met the swift blade of the 'Madame.'

As an eight-year-old, Francisco would not have realised that out of the chaos, in 1899, an ambitious young general, Napoleon Bonaparte, would rise to take control of France and create the conditions that would cause the young lad to leave his homeland forever.

The Atlantic port town of Vigo was less than two miles away from Francisco's home. Its fortresses and walls, which still stand today, are a reminder of centuries of attack and invasion by sea – a result of its location as the gateway to the Atlantic. Vigo was a regular port of call for ships trading between Europe and the New World, including to the British sugar plantations in the West Indies.

A turning point in the story of Francisco's emigration is the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 at which point Francisco is 14 years old. Upon taking command of the whole of France, Napoleon waged war across Europe. He wanted to invade Britain but he did not have a navy to match the British. He accumulated a navy of sorts by cobbling together a fleet of ships from France and Spain. The problem for Napoleon came in 1805 when Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson destroyed the French fleet off Cape Trafalgar as the fleet was pushing out from the Mediterranean.

After Trafalgar, Napoleon realised that he would not be able to invade Britain. Instead, he imposed a trade embargo – the Continental System – to weaken her economically. He decreed that France and all states under its control cease all trade with Britain. Spain fell into line. Portugal, which shares the Iberian Peninsula with Spain, remained an ally of Britain and continued to trade with her. Napoleon was incensed.

In 1809 Napoleon moved the European theatre of war to the Iberian Peninsula to wage war with Portugal – so began the Peninsula Wars. Napoleon had already forced the resignation of King Ferdinand VII of Spain and installed his brother Joseph as monarch, taking Spain under French control. The town of Vigo sits just north of Spain's border with Portugal and the French army occupied Vigo en-route through Spain to invade Portugal.

The people of Vigo did not take French occupation lightly. They rose up. They waged 'little wars' against the occupying French. The Spanish word for war is 'guerra.' The word 'guerrilla' is therefore, in Spanish, a little war.

So the people of Vigo (the 'guerrilleros') and the military harassed and forced the French out of their town. This event is still celebrated each year with a festival, the 'Reconquista di Vigo.' It is an event worth celebrating because on 28 March 1809 Vigo became the first town in Europe to successfully expel Napoleon's army. News of the success of the tactics used by the people of Vigo to defeat Napoleon's army spread to England and this is the first time that the word 'guerilla' enters the English lexicon.

It is unlikely that Francisco is part of the fighting because in this type of urban warfare guerrilleros tend to be peasants and townspeople and Francisco Romero was neither of those things. By 1809 Francisco was eighteen years old and probably at sea, apprenticed to a ship's master on a merchant ship.

In retaliation for Napoleon's Continental System, Britain imposed blockades against France and French interests. The cumulative effect of all of this turmoil was a depression in Europe. In the following years Galicia experienced economic hardship and harsh living conditions. In migration terms these are 'push factors.'

Some years later, Francisco of the Sea has risen to the senior position of boatswain on the Spanish merchant ship the *Rosita* which, on 24 December 1815, set sail from Santa Marta, bound for Kingston, Jamaica, with a cargo of dry goods. Having delivered her cargo, she then left Kingston on 5 January 1816. The following day, the *Rosita* was captured by Renato Beluche in his ship the *La Popa*.

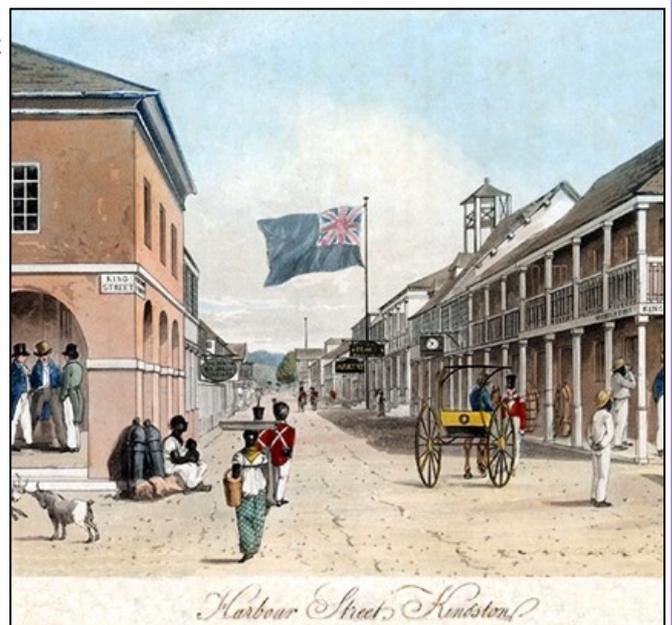
Beluche was well-known amongst freedom fighters of the Caribbean. One year earlier, in January 1815, he had been involved in the battle of New Orleans. Beluche had sailed to the Gulf of Mexico to support American General Andrew Jackson in successfully resisting a British invasion at New Orleans.

Beluche put the crew of the *Rosita* in chains and installed his own crew on board. He then transferred the *Rosita's* captain, Pedro Bruno, and two boatswains, Jose Buadas and Francisco Romero to *La Popa*, headed for Les Cayes, and held them captive onboard for ten days. For that ten days, Francisco of the Sea had front row seats to the machinations of the key figures of the Spanish American wars of independence.

Renato Beluche was a privateer in the service of General Simón Bolívar. Just before picking up Francisco and the *Rosita*, Beluche had delivered Bolívar to Les Cayes to organise a fleet of seven privateers that would wage a campaign for freedom for Venezuela, Ecuador, Columbia and Peru. While Francisco was a captive of Beluche, he overheard conversations about the presence of Bolívar in Les Cayes and the arrangements being made, he witnessed the capability of Beluche and the *La Popa*. When Beluche had re-marked and sold off the cargo of the *Rosita*, he was finished with her. He returned Captain Bruno and the two boatswains to the *Rosita* and her crew, landed the *Rosita* on the coast of Cuba and let them go. On 24 January, soon after being set free by Beluche, Spanish patriots Captain Bruno, Jose Buadas and Francisco Romero made a joint declaration to Spanish authorities in Santiago de Cuba, detailing the plans they had overheard and the arms they had witnessed on board the *La Popa*. Within two months of Francisco's captivity, Beluche would rename *La Popa*, the *General Bolívar* and with Simón Bolívar onboard, would set sail from Venezuela to liberate half of South America from Spanish rule.

As a boatswain, Francisco of the Sea would have lived most of his life at sea with no real fixed address. He would have known all the ports of the Caribbean Sea well, but he seems to have had a preference for Kingston, Jamaica even as a young man. His brother Manuel joined him there, possibly also feeling the push factors of the post Napoleonic depression in Europe. In 1818 Manuel died and was buried in the atrium of the Catholic church in Kingston.

Throughout New Spain, the population was organised by a 'Sistema de Castas,' a caste system that classified people into four classes by their racial background and birthplace. This was not just a social system, it played a part in every aspect of life, including wealth and taxation. The wealthiest people in this system were those of Iberian Peninsula/European birth. The most powerful of those were the Spaniards. In the 'Sistema de Castas' that was in place throughout New Spain and the Caribbean, Manuel and Francisco Romero, both born on the Iberian coast, could live a life of comparative privilege. The fact that he was buried in the atrium of the church rather than the churchyard indicates that the brothers had been welcomed into the upper echelons of Jamaican Catholic society.



Harbour Street, Kingston, Jamaica

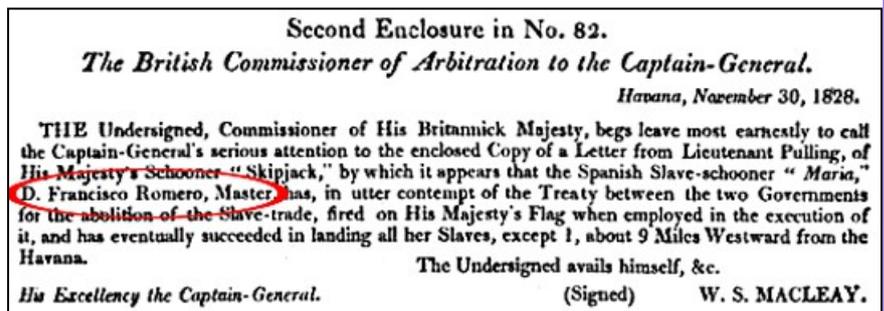
By 1826 Francisco of the Sea is in a relationship with Sera Maria De Leon who is of Spanish descent but who is a native of Kingston. In 1827 Francisco and Sera Maria baptise a daughter, and name her Manuela, perhaps in honour of Francisco's brother. Manuela is the first of five children they will have together between 1827 and 1836. "Francisco of the Bridge" is their third child.

In 1828, while Sera is pregnant with the couple's second child, Don Francisco Romero – 'Don' because he is now a Captain – approaches the African coast. This was part of the triangular trade of the time. Francisco is in command of the Spanish schooner *Maria* with a cargo of cloth and goods. He offloads his cargo in exchange for a receipt from Duke Ephraim promising to repay him in palm oil.

The British Navy has received orders to stop slave trading. So, aware that he is being watched by British ships Francisco retreats off the coast to wait before loading some of his return cargo bound for the Caribbean. Picking up his return cargo had been increasingly difficult since slavery had been outlawed in certain parts of the world. On this occasion Francisco arranges for a French vessel, lying in the river Calabar, to bring out to his ship his cargo of fifty African slaves. He then sails for Cuba.

As the *Maria* approaches the coast of Cuba, an English schooner-of-war, the *Skipjack*, signals with a gunshot to bring the *Maria* to. The *Maria* ignores *Skipjack's* signal, so the *Skipjack* gives chase. Don Francisco orders his crew to bring the *Maria's* cannon to position and orders open fire on the *Skipjack*. Having fired upon the British ship the order is given to continue on course for Cuba and the *Maria* outruns the British ship. Instead of following in hot pursuit the captain of the *Skipjack* chose to retire to his cabin to complete his journal. He knew that because he had discharged his cannon and was subjected to return fire, there would be a Naval Commission of Enquiry into the incident.

There was indeed a Commission of Enquiry in Havana and the correspondence of William Sharp McLeay, British Commissioner of arbitration to the joint British and Spanish Court of Commission for the abolition of the slave trade – which can still be found in the UK National Archives – is the source of this information. The original of McLeay's letter is held in the archives of the Bodleian Library at Oxford University.



The *Maria* weighed anchor nine miles west of Havana at a village called Jayminta where she succeeded in disembarking her cargo of slaves with the assistance of numerous boats from the shore. The crew of the *Maria* escapes. The *Skipjack* eventually arrives on the scene and they board the wrecked *Maria* where they find papers, abandoned objects and the ship's log which of course mentions nothing of slave cargo. They know that she has been carrying slaves because they find a sick Congolese slave on board. Sadly he has been judged not of merchantable quality and therefore valueless. The slave recovers and is called to give evidence to the Court of Mixed Commission – the first time the testimony of a slave is allowed in such a case.

In 1831 slavery is abolished in Jamaica and in 1836 slaves were emancipated. It is estimated that during the entire period that slavery was practised by the richest nations of the world against the poorest people in the world, about 12 million slaves were traded.

Before leaving the topic of slavery altogether let's acknowledge the grievous harm done to its victims, and also that for a very long period it was misguidedly considered by many to be an acceptable commercial practice. The famous Christian hymn 'Amazing Grace' was composed by John Newton, who for a time was a merchant sea captain just like Francisco of the Sea, and he too carried slaves as cargo. In England the Slavery Abolition Act offered the English slave owners' compensation for their financial loss. Archive records in England show that 46,000 English slave owners made claims.

But the slaves were not in the United Kingdom. The slaves were located on plantations all around the world. There were 800,000 of them – they received nothing. In 1834 the Government paid out £20 million – £16 billion in today's money to slave owners. John Gladstone received the most, he was the father of the future British Prime Minister William Gladstone. In 1834 he was paid £107,000 for 2508 slaves (£80 million today). Not surprisingly, William Gladstone's maiden speech in the House of Commons contained a strong defence of slavery.

So in 1831 slavery is abolished in Jamaica and also in that year Don Francisco and Sera baptise their third child and name him Francisco after his father (and his father's father). This baby boy is Francisco of the Bridge. Francisco of the Sea continues as a ship's captain but now carries different cargo between the ports of the Caribbean and Europe. He dies in 1844 when young Francisco of the Bridge is thirteen years old.

Next time we will examine how young Francisco made his way to Australia and then Albury where, in 1887, he built a beautiful bridge in Smollett street which still carries traffic today.

**HAYDN BUNTON'S FOOTBALL JUMPER**

**Greg Ryan**

We had a unique opportunity to view a rare piece of VFL/AFL memorabilia, the Fitzroy jumper of Haydn Bunton. Bunton gave the jumper to a 5 year old Roger Farquhar at a party held in the Nairne Police Station (South Australia) in 1950. Roger now lives in the district and brought to our meeting the well worn jumper, adjudged as one of the most important and valuable pieces of VFL/AFL memorabilia in existence.

The logo on the front of the jumper was first used by the Fitzroy club in 1942. Bunton wore the jumper during World War II charity games played on May 9 and May 23 of that year.

Haydn William Bunton was born in Albury on July 7, 1911, the son of Ernest and Matilda Bunton and younger brother of Cleaver, George and Rita. The Bunton brothers played together in Albury's first Ovens & Murray Football League premiership win in 1928, defeating arch-rivals St Patricks. Seventeen year old Haydn won a silver cup as best afield awarded by umpires and a gold watch for the most popular player donated by the Ladies' Auxiliary.

Bunton went on to become the most decorated footballer to ever play the Australian Rules code of football. His awards included three Brownlow Medals (VFL Best & Fairest, 1931, 32 and 35) and three Sandover Medals (WAFL Best & Fairest, 1938, 39 and 41). He was elected as an AFL Hall of Fame Legend and selected in the AFL Team of the Century, Fitzroy Team of the Century, Albury Team of the Century and NSW's Greatest Team.

Bunton could quite easily have been a Test cricketer! In a Country v City cricket match at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1928, 17 year old Bunton made a century, compiling 144 not out for Country.

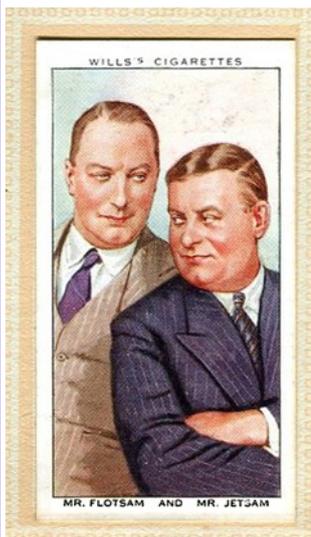
Bunton left Fitzroy in 1938 to be captain-coach of Subiaco in the WAFL. He enlisted after the 1941 season and on discharge in 1945 played for Port Adelaide. He was killed, aged 44, in a road accident in country South Australia in 1955. Cricketing great and former St Kilda footballer Keith Miller paid tribute in the Sydney Sun: "Bunton was the Bradman of football ... he created a record unprecedented in the history of the game."



The jumper, well worn by Roger as a child and Haydn Bunton in the jumper, May 1942.

**CIGARETTE CARDS**

**Howard Jones**



Howard Jones reminded us that as kids some of us would collect cigarette cards. He showed us a recently acquired 1930s book of cards from the UK, published by the cigarette company, WD & HO Wills – it is entitled 'Radio Celebrities.'

Browsing through the book, most faces were not familiar, but in the middle was a card entitled "Flotsam & Jetsam" – Jetsam was Albury born Malcolm McEachern who became famous on the BBC in the 1930s and 40s.

Howard also brought in and played a couple of old recordings. The first was the song 'The Growing Place' commissioned by the Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation to promote the local development centre. The second from 1970 featured the Albury Grammar School Choristers singing Christmas carols.

**"MR. FLOTSAM" AND "MR. JETSAM."** "Mr. Jetsam" (Malcolm McEachern), the basso profundo, is an Australian, born at Albury, New South Wales. He has been a singer all his life, starting as a choir boy. Since starring with Melba on her Australian tour, he has sung in all parts of the world. He and "Mr. Flotsam" have been together since 1926. "Mr. Flotsam" (B. C. Hilliam) was born at Scarborough, but spent his early life as a journalist in Canada.

**FINAL EDITION OF THE ARGUS**

**Helen Livsey**

Helen Livsey had a copy of the final Argus from January 19, 1957, closing down after 111 years of publication in Melbourne, due to "heavy losses." The final copy included a column by Jack Davey, the opening night of GTV9 television and William Dargie wins his eighth Archibald Prize for a painting of Albert Namatjira. Helen also commented on the newspaper's "very ordinary" 'masthead' – see the copy at right.

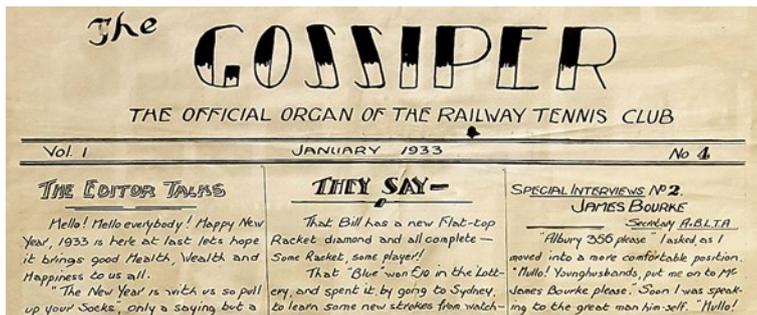


**RAILWAY TENNIS CLUB**

**Richard Lee**

Richard Lee showed us an edition of *The Gossiper*, a newsletter of the Albury Railway Tennis Club from January 1933. It is believed to have been produced by Jack Dallinger, grandfather of Society member Nicole Barlow.

This issue of *The Gossiper* contains all the usual items of interest in any good club newsletter – the editor’s thoughts, club tit-bits, the odd joke and items about various tennis club members.



A group of Railway Tennis Club members at the courts in front of the Albury Railway Station

Richard also showed us a short pictorial record of the Railway Tennis Club 1932-34, also from Jack Dallinger’s collection. The Club was located in front of the Stationmaster’s house at the Albury Railway Station and included at least three courts.

The Albury Lawn Tennis Club had been formed in 1894. At a meeting in October 1909, the ‘Albury and Border Tennis Association’ was formed. Clubs include St David’s, St Patrick’s, St Matthew’s, Wattle Park (Jindera), Thurgoona and Wodonga.

By the 1930s other tennis courts included Albury High School with six courts, Amatex & Schubach Street courts and the Methodist Club. A little later local suburbs had clubs along with Diggerville and Glenly. There were also quite a number of privately owned courts around town.

**MATES’ TIMBER YARD CRICKET CLUB**

**Chris McQuellin**

Chris McQuellin finished the ‘Show & Tell’ session with an impressive trophy, part of the Dallinger family collection and a cricket cap with an impressive tassel from the top, the initials MTYCC and underneath, 1913-14. Research revealed that the initials stand for ‘Mates’ Timber Yard Cricket Club.’ The *Border Morning Mail* reported in October 1912 that the cup had been presented to the Albury Junior Cricket Association by Rev Father Hartigan, better known to many as the poet John O’Brien.

Chris read an account from the *BMM* of September 1914 that included the presentation of a report from club secretary Mr C Coppin: “I congratulate the members on a very successful season past with good cricket due simply to good practices and good general feeling which existed amongst the members. The club carried with it the junior premiership thus retaining the cup for good having won the premierships for seasons 1913 and 1914. The cup was handed over to the captain Con Dallinger who lead us to victory in a most capable manner and I am pleased to say that he was presented with an honour cap by the members for services rendered in that capacity.”

The same report went on “It is pleasing to note that all prizes given by the Junior Association, for bowling, batting and wicket keeping were all won by members of our club. The respective winners were Messrs L G Castleton, B Hine and C Dallinger, which shows that from a cricket point of view, the club holds some of the cream of the association.”

Con Dallinger went on to play local cricket into the 1940s.



Con Dallinger’s cap and the cup. The caption on the cup reads: AJCA, Won by Mates’ Timber Yard CC, Season 1912-13

## CAMOUFLAGE NETTING

Sandra Endresz

Museum Collections Officer at Albury LibraryMuseum, Sandra Endresz brought along camouflage net making tools – two wooden needles or shuttles, and two wooden spacers. With two camouflage nets, they were donated to the Albury Regional Museum in 1985 by the Albury branch of the Country Women’s Association.



A netting shuttle,  
27 cm long, 3.1 cm wide

During World War II, the Albury branch of CWA and other branches nationwide, contributed to the war effort by making camouflage nets for the Army. The *Border Morning Mail* reported in 1941 that Mrs Gye, a member of the Albury branch, received instruction in net making at a CWA conference in Sydney then passed on that knowledge to other members and volunteers in Albury.

Men were also involved. Albury local Fred Vines junior learned the process and instructed local lads including Boy Scouts. It took up to 86 hours to make one net, depended on the size and experience of the net maker.

Percy Burrows assisted by constructing work stands. His wife, a CWA member, supervised the process. After learning the skill at the CWA rooms or at St Matthew’s Hall, volunteers could make nets from their own homes.



*Border Morning Mail*, 28 May 1941:  
The net completed by Mr Fred Vines, jun, which has just been sent to Sydney for inspection. From left: Mesdames Wooton, P D Burrows, M J Gye and R B Dickson.

The twine for the nets was supplied by the Army in either brown or khaki green. At the annual CWA Albury branch meeting in late 1943, members heard that nationwide 227,337 camouflage nets had been made for the Army (1,009 made in Albury), saving about £500,000.

As well as camouflage nets, CWA members also made sheepskin vests for flight crews, and numerous other woollen garments.

In October 1943, the Minister for the Army, Mr Forde, announced that volunteers could stop making camouflage nets as enough had been made.



## HUME & HOVELL CENTENARY EGG CUP

Ron Boadle

Ron Boadle brought along an egg cup produced to commemorate the 1924 Centenary of the Hume & Hovell expedition. Ron had found the cup in a junk shop in Geelong. Ron then reminded us that the bicentenary of that expedition is only four years away.

In relation to the Hume & Hovell Bicentenary, we also heard from Peter Harper. Peter has started preparation for a bike ride in late 2024 to commemorate the expedition. What he and other bicycle enthusiasts have in mind is to follow a route that is as close as possible to the expedition route visiting all the Hume & Hovell Memorials from the Border to Corio Bay.



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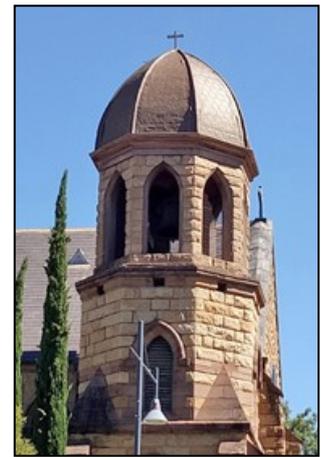
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## AN IRISH BELL

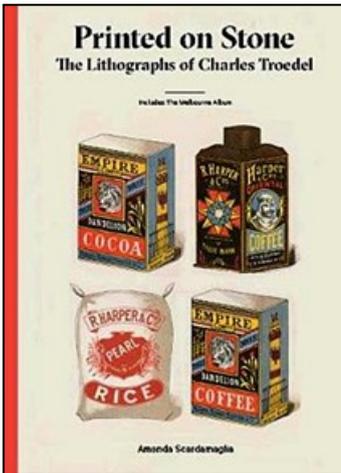
St Patrick's Church was planned by an Irish priest, Michael McAlroy. The builder was James Walsh, a former ship's carpenter from the same village as McAlroy, Philipston (now Daingean).

The original church of 1872 had a bell tower but another 52 years passed before a bell was installed. A wealthy widow, Sarah Daly, paid not only for the 700 kilogram bell to be cast in Dublin but also for the six-ton cupola to be raised 4.5 metres to house it, the total cost coming to £1000. Her donation was in memory of her grazier husband, John Daly, who died in 1918 leaving over £40,000, including many bequests to churches and charities.



Howard Jones

When World War II ended in August 1945, Gerry Curtis, later to become president of this Society, rang the bell until the rope snapped. Similar bells also made by the Matthew O'Byrne Fountain Head Bell Foundry, were installed in the Wagga cathedral and the Wangaratta parish church in 1924.



### WINNER OF THE VICTORIAN PREMIER'S HISTORY AWARD 2020

*Printed on Stone: The Lithographs of Charles Troedel* This book by Amanda Scardamaglia provides a graphic history of print advertising in Australia. It uses Troedel's catalogue of lithographs to trace the production and evolution of nineteenth century Australian advertising.

<https://www.historyvictoria.org.au/product/printed-on-stone-the-lithographs-of-charles-troedel-by-amanda-scardamaglia/>

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gmjryan@bigpond.com

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**Meetings:** Second Wednesday of the month at 7.30 pm usually at the Commercial Club Albury.

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

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