

ELLEN WAUGH

In 1946, a *Border Morning Mail* journalist interviewed prominent locals in a series he termed "Then and Now, by Narrator". On 15 May 1946, he interviewed the only woman in his series, Mrs Ellen Waugh. She was often referred to as the lady mayoress, wife of long serving Mayor of Albury, Alfred Waugh. The journalist started the article commenting "Hitherto in this column my narrations have dealt with men well-known in the community, and whose public activities and recollections cover a wide field ranging forward from the 1860s to the present. Only lately did a woman step into the picture, and then for but a moment."

A&DHS, through Bruce Pennay and with support from Albury Library Museum and Wodonga Historical Society has secured digitising of the *Border Morning Mail* up until 1949. Below is a copy of the BMM article of 15 May 1946, available on the Trove website. Go to <https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/advanced/category/newspapers>

Early Hardships

Mrs Waugh, whose maiden name was Cockerell, was born at Woods Point, where she had her first schooling. When Mrs Waugh was quite young the family moved to Benalla, taking the journey by bullock dray, and there the girl who was to become mayoress of Albury for so many years, finished her schooling at the age of thirteen.

Her father was employed for some time on the railways, which were then being laid between Melbourne and Sydney. He worked in the early 1880s on the line that linked Albury and Wodonga, and also on the Wagga and Gerogery sections, his wife and children following where work took the bread-winner. At Gerogery, girls and boys set traps for opossums on Watson's estate. At Wagga they played about the river and Mrs Waugh recalls one adventure in which they paddled across the Murrumbidgee in a wooden washing tub.

The Cockerells lived again in Albury and Mrs Waugh was employed at McLennan's store [Dean St, east of the Albion Hotel], which in its day was recognised far and wide for the quality of the wearing apparel it stocked. Later Mr Cockerell took up as a teamster in Corowa, taking his horse-drawn wagon on long trips into the country.

In the 1880s and early 1890s Alf Waugh, a hefty young man willing to turn his hand to anything, had been battling around Victoria. His employment had ranged from work in a chemist's shop to French polishing. He moved north when a job was offered in Corowa. There he met Miss Cockerell, and in 1895 they were married.

In the same year they came to Albury for Mr Waugh to work for Mr Clark, who opened a butchering business in Townsend Street. After a few months, however, his employer left the venture and Mr Waugh opened the shop on the corner of Townsend and Smollett Streets, two blocks up from his first place of employment and set himself up as a butcher.

Work for Charity

The two newcomers were quite willing to take part in the work of the town and very soon were given plenty to do. In the years ahead Mrs Waugh was to give a great deal herself to the community, but more than anything else to the hospital. A committee of womenfolk was formed to build a children's ward at the old hospital in Thurgoona Street. It included Mesdames Waugh, Pardey, James Colquhoun, Gray among others, with the late Mr G A Gray, the only man member, as secretary. The plan for a new ward eventually expanded into the much broader scheme for a new hospital. The Municipal Council agreed to give the land, then nothing more than a reserve; Government help was assured provided the womenfolk subscribed a large sum, and the present [1946] hospital was the result. A group of houses fronting Dean Street was demolished and became the hospital vegetable garden. In recent years cabbages have given way to the Ambulance station and to the nurses' quarters.

To raise their share the women's committee got down to business in earnest. Concerts, dances, card parties and other forms of entertainment were held in Albury, Howlong, Brocklesby, Jindera, Wodonga and other district centres. This committee was the forerunner of other associations of women that have raised thousands of pounds for the hospital. For the greater part of her life Mrs Waugh's efforts have been devoted towards a better hospital.

The ambulance is another service to have benefited materially from her work. Ever since the establishment of an ambulance service in 1926, Mrs Waugh has been president of the auxiliary.



Ellen & Alfred Waugh after visiting the Netherlands. Queen Wilhelmina received Alfred as an officer of the Order of Orange Nassau.

Mrs Waugh's Fund

During the first world war she was most active, and after hostilities, continued the good work. She organised a bi-weekly euchre party, which year after year has brought in hundreds of pounds. Profit from the evening is little enough for the trouble involved, but Mrs Waugh is content with this small sum coming in regularly, and at the end of each year has distributed more than £500 [equivalent to about \$38,000 in 2022]. Last year her total disbursement was £334, divided among 21 different bodies in proportion as Mrs Waugh thought fit. Hospital, orphanage, ambulance, Scouts, Girl Guides and others receive their share. Everyone is content that Mrs Waugh should distribute what she collects as she deems it. There is never a question from the public nor from the charities authorities. Many of the folk who enjoy her card parties have been taking part in them since they were started years ago. Year after year, winter and summer, the good work has continued, and thousands of pounds have gone where money was needed.

It would not be an over-statement, I think, to say that every important public event in Albury this century has involved the two Waughs. In 1901 they were members of the entertainment committee which welcomed the Duke of Cornwall and York, later to become King George V. In 1927 they entertained the present King and Queen at Albury station, following on to Canberra for the ceremony of opening the new Parliament. In 1934 they entertained the Duke of Gloucester, here for the centenary celebrations.

In 1909 Mrs Waugh and her husband made a party with Mrs and the late F C Blacklock for a trip to Europe, in England seeing the King's horse win the Derby. In 1935 the two went off to Europe with the Local Government delegation, and after the official tour ended, betook themselves to Holland for a month made joyous by the good feeling which Albury had aroused in that country following its help to the Dutch plane "Uiver," forced down here in the famous air race.

In the sphere of local politics it is sometimes required of a mayor's lady that she serve as chairman at a meeting, open a flower show or preside at a gathering of women. Every now and then I encountered Mrs Waugh discharging such a duty, and each time she left me with the same impression – one of detachment yet of unobtrusive dignity. At times one sensed that she was nervous, as when standing before an audience to open a meeting. Her quiet self-possession was never lost, however, and often the few words required were prepared beforehand and read to the audience. Her ability then to say just what she wanted to say, just what was required were a lesson in conciseness and in the choice of the fitting remark.

"My Share and Her Own Too"

There is another side of Mrs Waugh with which, I am sure, my readers are familiar. For many years her husband has been an invalid, and has attended only to buying stock. For 30 years his wife continued the business of retail butcher. "Under my tuition," her husband half-humorously remarked to me, "my wife became the best butcher in Albury. Since 1915 I have not done a hand's turn in the shop and she has done my share and her own too."



Waugh's butcher shop after the addition of a second storey.

To become a competent butcher is an unusual achievement for a woman, and one of which Mrs Waugh speaks without restraint. She could do everything that was required in the conduct of the business – joint carcasses, make the small goods, pickle meat, keep accounts, "everything except buy a bullock, and I suppose I could do that too if I needed." There was, too, the responsibility of running a home, of being so long a mayor's wife with its many attendant duties, and of her own often onerous work for charity.

Mrs Waugh as a butcher was how I first met her. As a lad I would ride a pony to Waugh's shop for our household supplies of meat. It was not strange to me that a woman should be handling knife and cleaver and saw as deftly as a man, but it was strange that her spectacles did not sit quite straight on her nose. They slanted slightly to one side, and were worn rather low down, probably to make it easier to look over the top. As for the shop, there was sawdust on the floor and the carcasses or half carcasses hung heavy on the gleaming rail, nothing unusual about that. But there was something different in here. Whereas other butchers I knew then had the butt of a large tree for a chopping block, this place had an elaborate man-made one. It was oblong like a table and had turned legs and brass bindings, and the heavy top was made of thick blocks of wood, worn to a wavy surface from years of chopping and sawing.

One other thing, and this was fascinating. Over against one wall hung a great steel axe or cleaver, handle and blade all one solid piece of steel. It was the very thing that a masked headsman must have used in bygone centuries, and this fancy was so strong that even today I'm not quite sure that perhaps it wasn't so used!

In a room at the rear rolls of beef lay submerged in the brine tubs, and a sausage machine, big brother of the household pattern, but power driven, churned out its filling for the casings and which, when full and plump, deft crimps made into sausages.



Even more interesting than this however, was Mrs Waugh's accuracy in estimating weights. A frequent order I had was for seven pounds of beef. A clean cut with a knife, and then, as the scales steadied to register the weight they never showed less than the order, but always a few ounces over for good measure. "A pound of rump steak, cut thick with fat, please," and off would come the steak an inch and-a-half to two inches thick with an ample edging of fat, for in our household the steak had to be thick, underdone, and with a goodly proportion of fat. Mrs Waugh knew her customers' wishes, and she had plenty of them to satisfy.

Now in Retirement

In September 1944, the business was sold to Mr R J Hickey, of Sydney, and 12 months later the premises also were disposed of, Mr and Mrs Waugh having bought *Kia Ora*, an old stone house further along Townsend Street. However, they are still tenants of their first home as long-awaited repairs to the new one are not yet done. The many folk who have been able to assess the worth of the Waughs to the community will agree that Mrs Waugh has earned her leisure, but the many charitable bodies in Albury that have benefited from her munificence will hope that she continues to foster them.

Editor's Note: Alfred Waugh was an Albury alderman from 1905 to 1948, apart from a short break, and mayor 19 times between 1907 and 1938. He died in August 1948. Ellen Waugh died on January 27, 1956 and is buried next to her husband at Albury's Waugh Road Cemetery.

A HISTORY OF OPINION POLLS AND REFERENDUMS IN ALBURY

Howard Jones

In 1961, 17 Albury doctors, nine dentists and 10 chemists wrote a joint letter advising people how to vote in a city poll on fluoridation. "Vote against compulsory medication and don't be guinea pigs," they warned. The result of the compulsory poll on September 25 was overwhelmingly against fluoride, by 6888 to 1753.

A pro-fluoride group led by Dr Allan Hogan admitted defeat, but, with a more enlightened council emerging, their time came. In 1980 Albury council built a new water filtration plant. After a "very hot debate" (recalls ex-alderman Tony Ratcliffe) it incorporated a system to add fluoride. Thus Albury was one of the first NSW municipalities to comply with state health recommendations. Incidentally, Wodonga waited for fluoridation until 2005. Even then, 5000 people petitioned against it!

Fluoride was just one issue to be featured in 'local' referendums as distinct from the 44 questions put by the Commonwealth since 1901. They demonstrate how public opinion can change over time, for example on Sunday observance.

The first Albury-specific test of opinion were plebiscites in 1905 and 1906 to recommend the best man for mayor (women were not considered). Robert Wilkinson and Conrad ten Brink won the respective popular votes. The aldermen duly confirmed them in office, but a state law prevented this happening in later years.

In 1907, NSW asked each electorate to vote on whether a number of hotels locally should shut. As a result, two pubs in Albury, the Rose in Kiewa St and the Federal in Townsend St lost their licences. NSW as a whole voted in 1916 to close pubs at 6pm as a wartime measure which actually remained until 1955. In 1916, Albury favoured 9pm closing, but had to abide by the statewide majority for 6pm.

In 1928, NSW held a plebiscite on "Prohibition with compensation". All 90 electorates including Albury rejected prohibition. Nevertheless, 31 per cent of Albury voters wanted a US-style prohibition.

Among other "pub polls" was a NSW plebiscite in 1969 that rejected the idea of allowing hotels to open for drinks on Sunday. The Wran Government finally allowed that to happen in 1979.

The Municipal Elections.			
DECLARATION OF THE POLL.			
Alderman Ten Brink, Returning Officer, attended at the Mechanics' Institute at noon on Monday and announced the result of Saturday's polling as follows:—			
MAYOR.			
O'Shaughnessy, M.	...	...	294
Ten Brink, C.	...	...	146
Thomas, John	...	...	45
Wilkinson, R. M.	...	...	691

Albury Banner, February 17, 1905

Some other local polls were:

Hospital site (1914): The *Border Morning Mail* organised a survey of voters to help the Hospital Board choose a site for a new district hospital. Six sites were nominated, but the Wodonga Place site opposite the Botanic Gardens was omitted because it was considered too close to town! The winner was Scotsman's Hill (now Riverview Terrace). However, a Government expert favoured Wodonga Place because it was a council depot and the old Burrows mill site, and was convenient for Wodonga.

Electric buses (1922): A town poll called by council rejected by 377 to 61 a proposal to borrow £7000 to install an electric motor bus service. (In 2022, Sydney plans to buy thousands of buses with batteries to be charged overnight, as was proposed by town engineer R Creasey in 1922).

Lake Hume (1940): A BMM poll asked people, including children, to choose a suitable name for Lake Hume. The winner was Lake Hume with 313 votes, followed by Loch Hume 289, Hume Reservoir 125, Hume Weir 82 and Hume Dam 16. Despite that, many people still refer to "the weir".

Sunday Sport (1946): A municipal referendum overturned the council ban on Sunday sport at the Albury Sportsground. Sunday sport was approved by 1525 to 546, though it had to be free to the public.

Highway Bypass (1995): An unofficial Border Mail poll showed 82 per cent of respondents favoured an external bypass and only 15 per cent an internal one. At this time, the Commonwealth policy was to build an external, but the Albury and Wodonga councils, the NSW Government and Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation all wanted an internal.

Bypass again (1997): A council-run 'voluntary' poll again favoured an external bypass, when 61.3 per cent (13,134) disapproved the council policy of building an internal bypass first, with the hope of an external route later. The council policy remained unchanged and ultimately Prime Minister John Howard settled the issue by approve an internal road.

Council size (1997): A binding city poll determined that the size of the council be reduced from 12 to nine councillors in 1999.

One City (2002): A non-compulsory poll in Albury resulted in a 2-1 majority (5548 to 2823) against merging Albury and Wodonga as one city. The proposed merger failed for this and several other reasons.

Federation footnote: Referendums were held in each Australian colony in 1897 and 1898. Albury strongly for Federation – about 80 per cent supported it, but NSW as a whole was less enthusiastic – only 52 and 57 per cent in the two referendums. Women in NSW didn't have vote until 1903, so didn't vote.

THE PLEBISCITE.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	MR. MITCHELL'S SITE AND "LUTON" COMBINED.
<input type="checkbox"/>	BILLSON'S PARK
<input type="checkbox"/>	MR. ADAMS' PADDOCK, POOLE'S HILL.
<input type="checkbox"/>	WATSON'S PADDOCK, KIBWA STREET.
<input type="checkbox"/>	MESSRS ROXBURGH'S AND SELLE'S LAND
<input type="checkbox"/>	EDMONDSON'S PADDOCK.
<input type="checkbox"/>	SCOTSMAN'S HILL.

Place a cross in the square opposite the site which you select.

BMM poll, March 1914

ITEMS FROM TROVE

"ADAMSHURST" HOSTEL READY FOR H.S. GIRLS

Adamshurst will be ready for occupation as a high school girls' hostel next Tuesday, and boys will go into the hostel in Guinea St, [corner of Guinea & Olive] formerly occupied by girls. Mrs Foster, matron of the hostel, is busy supervising the placing of furniture, getting things into order for occupation, and gathering a staff. At present there are no vacancies for girls at the hostel, and there is a waiting list.

There are vacancies for boys, however. Meals will be prepared in the big Adamshurst kitchen and students from both hostels will eat at Adamshurst. Sub-matron in charge of the boys will be Mrs Orme, widow of a POW who died in Malaya. Mr L Eddy, headmaster of the High School, said yesterday that parents of country lads wishing accommodation for them should contact him.

Border Morning Mail, 21 January 1947



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MORE FROM TROVE

Members may be pleased to know that Victoria has been united with New South Wales with a new Union Bridge – on Trove.

They can read all about it and how the first carriages brought goods for sale from Victoria in the *Albury Banner* 4 September 1861.

For more, visit <https://trove.nla.gov.au/search/advanced/category/newspapers>

Newspapers
of Albury on
TROVE
1860-1949

75 YEARS OF ALBURY CITY

Albury & District Historical Society is helping to recognise 75 years since Albury was declared a city on December 18, 1946 and proclaimed a city on April 10, 1947.

Bruce Pennay has produced and narrated videos on behalf of our Society to track Albury becoming the city it is now.

Click on the links to view each of the three YouTube videos prepared to mark the 75th Anniversary.

[Declaring Albury a City](#) (6 minutes)

[Albury's Greatest Day](#) (12 minutes)

[The New City of Albury](#) (14 minutes)

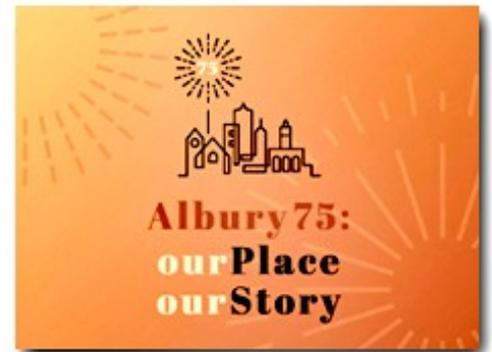
There is also a series of three previews 'From the Ground Up' produced for Heritage Week 2021.

[Becoming Albury](#) (11 minutes)

[Becoming Albury City](#) (20 minutes)

[Becoming Albury Wodonga](#) (8 minutes)

The official proclamation 75 years ago will be acknowledged and remembered on April 10.



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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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