



# BULLETIN

DECEMBER 2005 **453**

Meetings: 2nd Wednesday of the month,  
February to December

**Albury Regional Museum:** (02) 6051 3450  
Turks Head, Wodonga Place, Albury  
Open every day, 10.30a.m. to 4.30p.m.  
Website: [www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/museum](http://www.alburycity.nsw.gov.au/museum)

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**Subscriptions:**  
Individual Member \$2  
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**T**he Committee of the Albury and District Historical Society would like to wish all our loyal members and supporters that read our Bulletin a very Merry Xmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

**THE ALBURY AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MONTHLY MEETING MEETING WILL BE HELD IN THE ELIZABETH ROOM COMMERCIAL CLUB DEAN STREET AT 8PM WEDNESDAY 14TH DECEMBER 2005.**

**Theme for the night will be 'Show and Tell'.**

**ALL INTERESTED ARE MOST WELCOME TO ATTEND.**

- Please note: When you enter the club please check the notice board in the foyer for venue of meeting

**Don't forget the Xmas Party 9<sup>th</sup> December at Commercial Club**

## *HISTORY OF 2AY & more Importantly THE HIGHWAY OF COMMUNICATION TO DATE:*

*Our guest speaker for the month of November was Frank Davidson, who is the manager of AM 1494 2AY a member of the Ace Radio network.*

*This year 2005 is the 75<sup>th</sup> year of 2AY Radio Broadcasting in Albury- Wodonga.*

Who would have thought on December 17<sup>th</sup> 1930 as the switch was turned to commence broadcasting to the Albury Region, that in a short time span of 75 years, broadcasting would not reach only the region of Albury, but have the ability to reach far flung corners of the globe from Dubai to Dallas, from Ireland to Darwin and from Howlong to Hamburg, all by what we know today as the internet?

For that matter, who among us could have foreseen the massive technological changes that have happened since 1930 and in fact the massive changes that have taken place in the past 25 years

Even the past 5 years!

Suffice to say, radio as we know it is changing rapidly and the next 5 years will see even more technological changes than what has been evident over the past 5 years

But first in 1921 the sealed set scheme was introduced in Australia. The wireless was set to one station and within 2 years approximately 1400 Australians were able to class themselves as radio listeners!

Two classes of radio in the 20's – class A - achieved revenue by subscriptions while class B licences were able to sell advertising.

By 1929 approximately 310,000 Australians were classed as radio listeners. By comparison 2005 has approximately (check CRA figures) listeners to AM and FM formats throughout Australia.

## **1930**

The year 2AY was first switched on in Albury, Australia had 8 ABC national class stations, and 33 stations throughout Australia were B class.

A philosophy of the government of the day when setting up the broadcasting requirements of radio stations – suggested the following as words of advice to listeners:

"be an epicure, not a glutton of broadcasting!  
Listen carefully, not carelessly"

Now for me to stand here tonight and attempt to describe the 1930's, 40's and 50's to the Albury and District Historical Society is a feat that I would not dare to attempt.

Your knowledge and data of the early days of 2AY during that

## **Dr. Groves from CSIRO visit to the area.**

*The Historical Society received a letter from Dr. Groves of Canberra who works in the weed control section of the CSIRO.*

*Dr. Groves arranged to meet with Max Barry and the present owners of the Patterson property at the Bowna Arm of the Hume Dam where the original Paterson Curse was grown. It was brought to this area as a household garden plant from South Australia and is now growing wild in most parts of Australia. The overseas origin of the plant is unknown*

period is welcome, in particular as 2AY celebrates our 75<sup>th</sup> birthday at present via on-air segments and interviews.

So at this point I want to focus on the history of 2AY in particular from 1979 to present.

### **1979**

I arrived in Australia from the United States, dead set on breaking into the world of Commercial Radio in Australia..

Fortunately I had an ally in radio one Mr. E. J. "Ric" Pattison.

Mr. Pattison just happened to be the best friend and snooker playing buddy of my father-in-law Mr. Bob Parker.

No prizes for guessing who was among the first people I was introduced to when I arrived in Australia.

In fact, Eric, ("Rick" to his friends) and his wife Jean were among the guests at my wedding in Albury later that year.

I recall Eric's words of advice to me along the lines of : soften your accent Frank, always speak to the audience as if you are speaking to your family and be natural, as the

people who hear you one day, will see and speak to off air the next day.

Even with the family connection, it still took me 12 months to land a full time job with 2AY.

During which time I was fortunate to make the acquaintance of many people through my first job in the media, at the Border Mail and in particular the Twin Cities Post, but that is another story.

I eventually landed the coveted night shift announcing between 8 and 12 midnight, weeknights and also Saturday night between 6 and 12 midnight.

During those first air shifts, I was able to learn and meet numerous 2AY personalities – Bruce Carter, Mike Barrow, Col Stuart, Gordon Murison, Stan Blakemore, Terry Clarke, Peter Verhoeven, plus meet the hard working sales crew at the time – Al Scown, George Bunton, John Duncombe, Vince Duncan, Trevor Kells and Brian Wolf and many others who all became part of the rich radio tapestry of life that was 2AY in 1980.

As well, I met people who shared the same passion and feeling for 2AY as I did – Paul McSwiney and Steven Block who I still work with to this day and you know what, we still believe as strongly today as we did in 1980 of the strength and history of 2AY.

It was very fortunate to make friendships with the local politicians of the day – Harold Mair and his press secretary of the time, Roy Guthrie, Ian Glachan (who was still a newsagent during that period), Wal Fife, Lou Lieberman, John Roach, Graham Crapp, Ray O'Toole, Ray Stubbs and many other local and national political personalities.

However it was one dear friend who always had the time to stop and chat and with this yank no matter how busy – I speak of Cliff

Chamberlain - to say Cliff was treasure trove of information and stories would be an understatement.

With Cliff's help and as part of the 2AY work ethic to be involved in all local events, I was able to be actively involved with many Carols by Candlelight celebrations, Kids Picnic in the Parks, the Albury City Council disco's and of course the annual Mad Hatter regatta.

One never has regrets, but one regret is never getting Cliff to record his many stories and anecdotes to a radio friendly format.

(Do short nod to Laurie Henry and his stature in Albury-Wodonga radio in the 70's)

I spent 9 years with 2AY and during that time had many an interesting time. Like the time I had to make an emergency dash to the men's room during the John Laws show – I asked Ray Terrill to look after things for me, Ray of course always obliging did just that. However I wasn't to realise that while occupied in the toilets, he had hooked up the internal speaker with a bit of help from chief technician Terry Clark, to play a fake signal which gave me the impression that Ray and Terry were talking on air about the fact that Frank was sitting in the toilet. Needless to say I raced out of the John, to see Ray and Terry doubled over with hysterical laughter at the practical joke.

There was also the time when a rather unhinged listener took offence at something or other said during my night shift and ended up smashing all the front windows across the top floor of our old studios in Dean Street

Thankfully I had gone home that night and also thanks to an alert passer by, the vandal was caught and later charged with several acts of vandalism.

Knowing the way radio works, that person is probably a CEO of a



media organisation today!

But let's look at the media landscape in Albury-Wodonga in 1979.

There was the:  
Commercial Radio Station-2AY ,  
Radio Station 2CO,  
the local paper the Border Morning Mail  
and our first Television station –  
AMV4.  
We were able to switch to the ABC  
which was on relay from Melbourne.

Now flash forward to 2005 and  
what is the media landscape  
today?

Two Commercial FM Radio  
Stations-  
Star & the River,  
one AM station 2AY,  
one public radio station 1073FM,  
and a variety of ABC Radio  
formats both AM and FM

A mix of low power limited broadcasting area stations broadcasting anything and everything from horse racing, dance music to tourism and radio.

Snippets of outlying radio comes our way from 3NE, Sun FM, 2WG and numerous other sound bits depending on the time of night.

Three Commercial TV stations- all showing the best of free to air TV programmes are: Prime, Win Southern Cross, ABCTV and SBS and of course for the 10 per cent approximately that have Austar or digital connected. There is another 50 channels or more at our fingertips and you know what people still complain that there is nothing on TV!  
Add to that mixture – the Internet!

Communications today enables us to speak to the other side of the world as clear as if speaking next door.

### ***The Global Network.***

Suffice to say, 25 years has seen a massive quantum shift in the media landscape, let alone 75

years!

It all comes down to what is broadcast on the wireless. If you as the listener don't like what you are hearing – you have the power to turn it off.

However the single most important factor when it comes radio. It doesn't matter what format. Doesn't matter what frequency. AM, FM or the Internet. If it isn't entertaining, if it isn't a vital part of the local community, if it doesn't reach and touch it's audience, it isn't local radio!

2AY has a proud and strong history of being the local station for 75 years.

With the recent change in ownership from September 1<sup>st</sup> and purchase by the Ace Radio Group, rest assured, that heritage will be around for a further 75 years.

Rest assured one more thing- 2AY will always be a vital part of this community, through our news, through our sponsorship of events and through the employees that make 1494 2AY what it is today and what it will be in the future-local

### ***QUESTION OF THE MONTH.***

Who were some of the earlier Announcers on 2AY?

Jill Wooding remembers:

1. George Jennings
2. Anne Dean
3. Bernard Harper
4. Laurie Henry

others that were mentioned

5. Ray Kidd
6. Eric Pattison
7. Cliff Chamberlain
8. John Proust
9. Ray Currie
10. George Bunton
11. Ron McGann
12. Cleaver Bunton
13. Peter Joseph
14. Gerry Oliver
15. Steven Oliver

Questions answer by Frank

Davidson about Radio 2AY.

Q. June Shanahan wanted to know who Ace Network were?

A. Ace network is a company that was started in 1984. They own AM stations at Colac, Gippsland, Hamilton, Horsham, Swan Hill, Warrnambool and Albury-Wodonga also FM Stations at Horsham, Ararat, Swan Hill, Kerang, Colac, Apollo Bay, Lorne, Hamilton, Latrobe Valley, Bairnsdale, Warrnambool and they own the Melbourne Radio School.

Mark Day who owned the Truth newspaper purchased Hamilton AM station and Geoff Hannberry and his wife Helen from Hamilton bought into the company and then bit by bit started to buy up all the other regional radio stations throughout Victoria. They are a orientated family company and treat all their employees as part of their family.

Q. Joe Wooding wanted to know if they still used the transmitter at Wirlinga?

A. Yes the transmitter is still at Corry's road it has been there since they moved it from Pool's Hill. It is still in good working order.

Q. Doug Hunter mentioned about the first transmitter being up on Pool's hill.

Gerry Curtis gave us more information on the subject,

2AY started above Mid States Radio which was owned by the Phillips family. The store was situated at the western end of Dean Street. (The name Cec Rice came into it.) As Doug said the transmitter was up on top of Pool's hill and when the Mercy Hospital was built the land around it was sub-divided for housing, so the 2AY transmitter was moved to Corry's Road. Gerry remembers visiting their technician John Proust up on Pool's Hill. There was enough radiation to light

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## **RESEARCH FEES.**

**The Albury & District Historical Society Research officer Helen Livsey will undertake history research on behalf of the Society at a fee of \$20 per hour, plus printing, postage costs & a business size stamped addressed envelope. \$20 should be sent with initial inquiry to P.O. Box 822 Albury 2640.**

up an electric light globe that wasn't connected to any wires. He didn't know what it did to the people that worked there.

Q. Howard Jones asked did they have any plans in the next five years?

A. From 2AY's point of view there is nothing set in concrete at this stage, digital broadcasting is the new buzz word. 2AY at some stage will have digital broadcasting and will enable use to have another channel in clear sound similar to FM sound. There will be no new digital frequency allocated for a period of at least five years and the existing commercial radio broadcasters will have first option to go digital to give it a try. Personally speaking I think digital could be like the AM stereo craze back in the mid 1980's all of sudden it makes AM sound like FM.

Q. Helen Livsey asked what recorded History do 2AY hold?

A. 2AY has access to the Australian Film and Television school library in Canberra and they have quite a variety of historical segments. Locally 2AY has some tapes that was recorded at the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary which had bits and pieces of Albury-Wodonga. Steve, and various other staff members and myself have bits and pieces of air checks and tapes that would have recorded while on air. We have tapes of the

America's Cup and interview with Ricky May so we do have a bit of History

Doug said that he had been speaking to a couple of people and they reminded him about Laurie Henry's April Fool's joke. Laurie told all his morning listeners that the Concorde was landing at the Albury Airport at the 10.30am, it was surprising the people that went out to the airport. Apparently someone was still gazing into the sky as the sun went down.

John Craig told the story about the Circus being in town. Laurie Henry was under the big top at Norieul Park. He was in the centre of the ring with the elephants, the clowns and the trapeze artists describing all the antics of the performers, he was unbelievable

## **THE BIRTH OF ABC RADIO AND 2CO STUDIOS ALBURY.**

The radio manufacturing industry in Australia was led by George Fisk of AWA he lobbied the Government for the introduction of radio broadcasting in the early years. In May 1923 the Government called a conference of the main players. This led to the sealed set regulations where stations could be licensed to broadcast and then sell sets to "listeners in". The receiving device would be set to receive only that station. 2FC in Sydney was the first to be licensed and on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1923, but it's opponent 2SB (later called 2BL) was first to go to air officially starting on 23<sup>rd</sup> November that year. 3AR and 3LO went to air on 26<sup>th</sup> January and 13<sup>th</sup> October 1924 in Melbourne.

However the sealed set scheme wasn't taken to by the listeners, only 1400 people took out sealed set licences in the first 6 months of 1924. It was quite easy to avoid the licence fee by building your own set or modifying one you'd bought to receive more than one station.

There were two types of licence 'A' and 'B'. The 'B' stations had to generate their own revenue through advertising. 'A' class stations could advertise too but few did.

## **The Australian Broadcasting Company.**

In 1929 the Government did rationalize the transmission facilities and contracted the provision of programming to the Australian Broadcasting Company a consortium of entertainment interests. This company was nationalised in 1932 by the Australian Broadcasting Commission Act.

So in 1932 the two tier system was finalised; the national broadcaster, the ABC, with 12 stations and the commercial sector with station

## **2CO ALBURY**

The transmitter at Corowa was built for the Postmaster-General's Department by Standard Telephones and Cables (A/asia) Ltd. At a cost of 20 thousand pounds.

Electricity was laid on to the site by the Corowa Municipal Council from it's local generating station.

At that time there were more than 300 thousand licence holders in Australia and the number was rapidly growing. 2CO was designed to serve several hundred thousand people, in the Riverina down west as far as Wentworth, North eastern and Northern Victoria who had previously had been out of range or was plagued by interference and static.

Because of the large area to be served, 2CO was at that time the most powerful radio transmitter in the Southern Hemisphere and more than twice as powerful as any other transmitter in Australia. It had an aerial power of seven and half kilowatts and broadcast on a wave length of 536.7 metres.



## **Block 19 BONEGILLA**

The grand opening of the 'Beginning Place', Block 19 at Bonegilla, will be held on the 4<sup>th</sup> December. Bruce Pennay gave details on what will be happening over the two days.

The opening at Block 19 marks the arrival of post war immigrants. A lovely feature is an art wall, it is a wall of sounds, as you walk past it you hear voices with various accents telling something of their story of Bonegilla. A 'walk in their shoes' plus various other activities will be held.

The previous evening there is a multi-cultural dinner. Everyone is invited. Contact is Christine Thorpe of Parklands Albury-Wodonga,

2CO was linked to the national network, with programs provided mainly through 3AR or 3LO in Melbourne as is the case today which in turn was on relay

from Sydney in the earlier years, but to a much lesser extent now because of the great expansion over the years in the local program content. I was curious to know why they built the transmitter so far from Albury I thought it may have been because of the hills that surround Albury. I was told by the experts from the Post Master General's Department, later known as Post and Telecommunications that each time they built a new transmitter they had to find suitable land as the soil played an important role where the transmitters would be built.

The Official opening ceremony of the transmitter was held on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1931 at the the Corowa Literary Institute. A variety of musical items and entertainment was broadcast throughout the network.

There was already a Commercial Station in Albury that opened up a year or two earlier. Cecil Rice held the licence for 2AY and later passed it over to AWA.

As well as the Corowa transmitter station, 2CO was provided with a

small broadcasting studio in the Albury Post Office. There was a local part time employee whose responsibility was to compile and broadcast important local service information. This consisted mainly of news items compiled by agreement with district newspapers, weather reports and marketing information. The studio was a small, sound-proofed room with a microphone, gramophones for inserting some musical items into the local programme and a telephone for news gathering.

The first employee was Arthur Newnham, an officer with the electricity section of Albury City Council and the earliest records show he was paid two guineas a week for his services in the Australian Broadcasting Company.

Arthur Newnham continued on the payroll and the same system of obtaining news with the co-operation of newspapers continued.

There were standby diesel generators which come on automatically in case of power failure and also systems for relaying ABC programmes off-air from the other transmitters in case of failure in the land lines.

Later the ABC leased two rooms upstairs in Temple Court Chambers in Dean Street, Albury and these were fitted out as a rather more elaborate studio and a news-room.

The original transmitters were replaced with more modern equipment in the 1960's but the original buildings and masts remain. The original serial wires strung between the masts remained in service until a severe wind storm in November 1980 caused damage which led to their replacement.

With the increasing work Mr. Newnham was joined by another part time staff member, Mr. Cleaver Bunton who was an accountant, Alderman on the Albury City Council and later Mayor for a record term. Mr. Bunton was also Albury

news correspondent and part time announcer until 1975 when he was appointed to fill a casual vacancy in the Senate and was precluded from holding any other position with the Commonwealth.

Arthur Newnham continued his association with 2CO until 1949, when he retired after 18 years service. In that time he had seen and contributed to a great expansion in radio broadcasting in Australia and had become a household name to many thousands of people through daily local news broadcasts.

## **Uiver.**

Arthur Newnham was the principal actor in the rescue of the Uiver aircraft which had become lost in a storm on the night of October 23<sup>rd</sup> 1934 during the London to Melbourne air race. Radio broadcasts had indicated the DC2 aircraft was off course and lost, but it's whereabouts were not known until the drone of an aircraft was heard over Albury. Arthur Newnham realised it was the missing "Uiver" and raced to the studio, but found there was no PMG mechanics on duty to put the broadcasting equipment into operation. With the assistance of the engineer at the 2CO transmitter, Mr. Jim Nichol's, Arthur used an ordinary hand telephone as a microphone and Jim broadcast his voice over the transmitter, calling on car owners to race to the Albury race-course and illuminate a makeshift landing strip with their headlights. At the same time street lights were being flashed on and off in Albury to transmit the town's name in morse code. The aviator Parmentier and Moll saw the signals and the headlights, dropped a flare and landed safely on the very rain drenched race course. And the Uiver became bogged. The next morning they off loaded all mail and passengers and were pulled out of the boggy by about 300 residents and flew on to Melbourne to come second in the air race.

In the act setting it up in 1932, the Australian Broadcasting

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Company was given powers to "collect in such manner as it thinks fit, news and information relating to current events in any part of the world and may subscribe to news agencies" It was decided at the time that the ABC would change from Company to Commission.

It continues to obtain news mainly from the newspapers, but a controversy continued for many years over proposals for the Commission to run its own independent news service. In 1946, the Chiefly government amended the Broad-casting Act to require the Commission to establish its own independent news service with its own staff and allowed subscription to news agencies only for overseas news.

At that time the first full time recruitment to the staff of 2CO was made with the appointment of Basil Patman as Regional Journalist. He had been formerly employed on the highly respected rural newspaper, the "Albury Banner" and before that had a varied career embracing service in the British Army during the Boxer Rebellion in China and in France during the first World War. He taught himself shorthand, worked in a London Advertising Agency and migrated to a wheat farm in the Mallee in 1925. After some time prospecting in Gippsland he moved to Melbourne and supported himself during the depression by writing radio plays and stories for "Smith's Weekly". Basil served some time in the Australian Army in World War Two, became a hardware salesman and then moved into newspapers.

When he joined the ABC he was occupied initially in setting up the network of contract correspondents and organising news gathering for the vast region that was his responsibility. None of those original correspondents remain, but many provided daily dispatches of news until quite recent times. Stalwarts such as George Carver at Tallangatta, Clarrie Bennett at Junee, Arthur Cowan at Lockhart, Gavan Johnston Sen.

at Hay, Cleaver Bunton in Albury, Don Forbes at Yarrawonga just to name a few, gave many years of service.

Despite the difficulties of communications and the quite primitive conditions in the new office and studio in Temple Court, overlooking Dean Street, Basil successfully laid the foundation on which later advances in news gathering were built.

Arthur Newnham continued as announcer for the news prepared by Basil until 1949 when the ABC appointed its first regional office, Mr. Don Lassam, who became station announcer and interviewer and represented the ABC's interests in the area. At that time Basil was assisted by a part-time typist, Dorothy Vincent, whose sister was a History teacher at St. Joseph's Ladies College. She was always known as Miss Vincent to her students. I can remember vividly one of her subjects about the 'Early Stone Age.'

Dorothy recalls the difficult working condition's a telephone with one set of earphones and one rather antiquated typewriter. When tea-break came, one had to go downstairs to the back yard tap and fill the electric jug to have a cuppa.

There were evening and morning news bulletins every day, but when emergencies occurred the full resources of the station were thrown into serving the community.

Dorothy Vincent had memories of the disastrous bush fires of 1952. Although I was in my early teens I can remember them vividly. The trees on the hills around Wodonga at night were lit up like fairy land. The fire did so much damage.

The ABC staff were kept busy was taking phone calls for help warnings of fresh fire outbreaks, calling for volunteer fire-fighters and giving whatever help possible. The manually operated telephone exchanges in the country towns

played a great part in all this. It will be well remembered that the operator at the Barnawartha exchange at the peak of the fire calling in with descriptions of the fire and eventually the ring that told us it would be her last call: that most places had gone in the flames, except the Catholic Church, the fire was heading towards the exchange and she had to flee herself.

"That night the telephones ran hot, and so did the staff in the stifling atmosphere, of course there was no air-conditioning back then only fans and the smoke was so thick that the Albury War Memorial was hidden from view.

Don Lassom was on the studio phone and putting messages over the air, Cleaver Bunton kept coming with messages and the P.M.G. Technicians were on duty. Basil's wife Marion sustained everyone with iced coffee because there was no time for eating and the work ended only when the fires were brought under control".

Over the years the story has been the same on many occasions usually with emergencies such as bush fires and floods. Staff are willing to work long hours to keep the public informed of any crisis.

*By June Shanahan*  
To be continued.

## Notices:

Doug mentioned that Garry Morgan had started on the restoration of Adamshurst. Congratulations Garry.

John Alker-Jones was awarded the 2005 NSW Government Heritage Volunteers award. Congratulations to John also.

The Society still has a small number of Hume Dam Videos presented by Gerry Curtis. The cost is \$25.00 plus postage.

