

BULLETIN

AUGUST 2005

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February to December



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**THE ALBURY AND
DISTRICT HISTORICAL
SOCIETY ANNUAL
MONTHLY MEETING
WILL BE HELD IN THE
BRIDGE ROOM
COMMERCIAL CLUB
DEAN STREET AT 8PM
ON WEDNESDAY 10th
AUGUST 2005
ALL INTERESTED ARE
MOST WELCOME TO
ATTEND.**

AUGUST MEETING.

**OUR GUEST WILL BE
FROM MERCY HEALTH
CARE AND WILL SPEAK
ABOUT THE HISTORY OF
THE MERCY HOSPITAL
ALBURY.**

Question of the Month?
**Who are the Sisters of
Mercy?**

VISIT TO ALBURY'S SISTER CITY NANPING.

Introduction: Doug Hunter

Our guest speaker at the July meeting was Heather Taylor. Heather is a graduate of the University Melbourne where she majored in language and history. She has done post graduate studies in Accounting and Financial Management and Global Trade Management.

Throughout the 1980's Heather worked in public relations and was involved with the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act during the years of the Cain Government. More recently she worked in the local wine industry overseeing the supply and marketing processes from the grape to the bottled wine on shelves around the world and developed export markets in Asia, Canada and the United States. Heather joined the Albury City Council in 2003 and currently fills the post of acting team leader, Economic Development.

Heather's topic for the night was Nanping; the 'Socio Economic Aspects of Change.'

Guest Speaker: Heather Taylor.

China has a population of 1.25 billion people. Nanping is located in the province of Fujian, inland from the Taiwan Strait. The municipality of Nanping has a population of three million people. It is made up of four major towns and five lesser cities and then the regional areas.

Agriculture is a major force in the economy, and there is extensive tea growing, timber, bamboo, tobacco

and more recently, intensive dairying. In the city of Nanping and some of the other towns there is small industry, but it is mainly bamboo, timber processing and a paper mill. One of the major industries is a battery manufacturing plant.

Nanping is located on the confluence of three major rivers and its history relates very much to its position on the trade route to the major port of Fuzhou, which is an historically significant port and still is today. Barges continue to ply the river day and night.

Nanping is an extremely hilly municipality, with limited flat land. Nanping city is a lineal city, spread along the river banks below the steep, wooded hills.

My translator during my visit was Xiao Shijin, Section Chief, Foreign Affairs & Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Nanping Municipal People's Government. Xiao Shijin is our contact point for the Sister City relationship.

Whilst driving through the regional town of Jianou, Xiao Shijin asked if we could stop while he visited his mother. We meet the well worn lady who I estimate to be about 70 to 75 years old. The longer I was in China the more I pondered over what sort of a life that this woman had actually experienced and others of her generation.

From the first Ming dynasty, which began in 221 BC, China has been a strong economic force in its region, it has had an extremely proud culture. It has practised religious tolerance, with Muslims, Confucians, Buddhists and Christians all being



free to follow their faith. The Chinese have been inventive and innovative and have had a proud tradition of venerating the learned and philosophers. They worship their ancestors and have extremely strong family bonds. However throughout its long history China has been a country troubled by fighting between warlords, which seen the borders expand and contract over the centuries.

As a child the mother of Xiao Shijin would have been caught up in the turmoil of the Japanese invasion of China in 1937, the 1946 Civil War. The Peoples Republic of China would have been created when she was a teenager.

During the Great Leap Forward, she would have laboured as a worker in an agricultural commune. Following the Sino-Soviet split and subsequent withdrawal of aid by the Soviets, she would have struggled to feed her large family during the famine of 1960, when 30 million Chinese died.

Following the Cultural revolution and Mao's return to power, she may have been a member of the Red Guard, but more likely, as a widow with 5 children, she would have been a witness as the revolution sought to destroy "old custom, old habits, old culture and old thinking". She would have watched the closure of schools and universities, the persecution of the intellectuals, artists and scientists, the ransacking of places of worship, the introduction of the uniform garb of communism and the destruction of the family unit as members were sent all over China labour in communes.

As a young school girl I had the fortune of travelling to Asia in the early 1970's and I can remember standing on the border of Hong Kong and China looking at the forbidden territory to the north, with its rice paddies and the mountains in the background. Owing to China's position in world politics at that time, I don't think anyone anticipated that in my life time I would have the ability to travel there.

During 80's there was a significant modification to the Communist totalitarian policies and there was a move to engage with the west. In

1993, Deng Xiaou Ping proclaimed, "to get rich is glorious". Today, newspapers are full of information on China's emergence into the world of capitalism and its massive economic growth, and westernisation and reinvention of itself

The reconstruction of China is happening at a rapid pace and is placing much pressure on the country's social and built infrastructure. In the major Chinese cities, new sky scrapers are replacing the old buildings of China. Those that remain are like islands, shadowed by modern architecture. Planning in many towns appears to be haphazard.

People are moving to these cities from the country, looking for employment and higher wages. Many are unable to find employment and there is a pressure placed upon housing this expanding population. Amidst the wealth, poverty is rife and living conditions for many are poor. The small country townships are depopulating and the supportive family structure has broken down.

Although labour is very cheap there is high unemployment. To enable the younger generations to have a job, the government is enforcing a retirement age for women of 55 and for men, 60.

Pollution in China is a major concern. Industry is powered by state subsidised coal and the pollution is obvious by the constant smog and grime in the air. Heavy industry in Nanping is limited and it does not suffer the problem of air pollution, but does have a problem of water pollution.

How are the lives of people in Nanping being affected by the events of recent history - the political changes and the rapid transition from a strict communist regime to a regime of economic socialism?

Xiao Shijin's father died when he was 12 years old. He had four siblings, and after he left school he worked in a bamboo factory. He was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity for further education and learnt English. This was his passport to a better life. He is now a government cadre, with great influence and power over people. It is he who determines who may be given a visa to travel out of China.

His mother's circumstances today are very much reliant upon his financial support. Under Communism, she, and all other citizens, were

provided with housing, food, clothing, medical care, and minimal education. Now there is no universal social support and surety of a paying job. Many are now destitute, with no savings, no superannuation and no pensions.

In Nanping today, there are serious attempts to improve the social and economic situation of the people. The Government is trying to improve employment opportunities and economic growth and there is much focus upon educating the younger generations as they are seen as the way of the future.

They are hampered however by an ageing, poorly educated, rural population and the slow decision making process of a highly centralised Government.

Tourism Industry is a major source of potential revenue. They are trying to build the international profile of the famous Wuyi Mountains as a tourist destination. This is a World heritage site, currently popular with domestic tourists.

Factories: Cheap labour, with no heed to safety, dated equipment.

Pollution: Water pollution being addressed. Schools and factories are awarded green points for each tree and garden plant.

Education: Compulsory for all children to the age of 15.

Public Facilities: Also addressing the quality of life and restoring much which was lost during the Communist years. Sport and culture are being promoted, religious freedom has been restored, centres are being built for the increasing number of retirees to access libraries, art, culture, games and learning.

Returning to the story of Xiao Shijin's mother, I do not believe that she has benefited from the China's social changes. She is a member of a generation sacrificed - which has been caught between two different systems and slipped cracks as the Government has removed the social systems of communism before they have identified the social problems which would arise and consider the solutions.

Despite watching the rise and fall of communism and the introduction of

Albury Life Through Photo

From August 4 to 27th at the Albury Library, QE11 Square.

An exhibition of photographs depicting Albury life and lifestyle using the photographic collection of the Albury Regional Museum

socialist capitalism, they are no better off than their parents or ancestors under the warlords who ruled China throughout the dynasties. However, the picture for their children looks brighter and there will be more freedom, more choice and more opportunity for most. It is to be hoped that this time the adage which is so often too true "history repeats itself" proves incorrect.

JACOB BRANN an Early Pioneer. By Jan Hunter

"Albury's Forgotten Pioneer" was how Mrs Yvonne Gibbons described her grand father, Jacob Brann.

Jacob Brann, known locally as Jakey, was born in 1868 at Chiltern, where his Polish-born parents, Henry and Johanna, owned a department store.

Jacob came to Albury in 1886, first managing a grocery shop for Mr Buchhorn, then setting up his own Drapery business in Olive Street, near the site now occupied by Lowes clothing shop. This was burned down in 1900 but Jacob rebuilt and in 1909 sold to Alfred Perl.

Jacob married Minnie Kate Wilson, who had come from Mudgee to be headmistress of Albury Girls Public School. After the marriage Jacob built 3 terrace houses in Swift Street where he lived with his family. The Brans had four daughters and two sons. One son (a twin of the youngest daughter) died aged two years.

In the early years of the 1900's Jacob bought 88 acres of land for 1000 pounds in Fallon Street North Albury where he established a Jersey stud called "Sylvania." In 1906 Jacob had a brick home built, by Mr. Ernie Sharp, set back from the road, facing south along Frauenfelder Street. Albury bricks were used. The home had 3 large reception rooms, a spacious hall, 6 double bedrooms, a bathroom as

large as a bedroom, kitchen with gas stove, electricity, generating plant and a hot water system. In 1911 some wooded areas of his property were sub-divided.

In addition to the cattle stud, Jacob had a reputation as a gardener. At "Sylvania" he had a wonderful rose garden, a vineyard and an orchard. He had an intense interest in poultry and was a noted poultry judge.

Jacob was chairman of the North Albury Butter Factory and was responsible for the installation of the cool stores at the factory, which proved a great boom to district orchardists and others. He had his dairy milk separated each day and sent to the factory for processing.

Jacob Brann had a fertile mind and excellent organising ability and was actively involved in many community affairs. He was President of the North Albury Progress Association when, in 1926, he wrote to the council complaining at their lack of action in declaring the area from North Street to Fallon Street a residential only area.

An application for a shop in North Street was seen as lowering the tone of the "fine houses" in that area! That North Albury Progress Association lobbied for an infants school in the early twenties. Jacob was the founding president of the Glenly Tennis Club in North Albury. He and his wife were non-playing members and one of his daughters served the first ball at the official opening of the new courts in Stephen Street, in 1928. (Jacob was obviously interested in sport - he had played in the premiership side of the Albury Football Club in 1894)

Jacob was an original member of the Lavington Agricultural Bureau, formed around 1912 and he has been described as the "pioneer of agricultural education in this district" He held most of the executive positions in the Lavington Bureau and at one time he held office in the Albury branch as well. He was president of the South District Agricultural Bureau for 15 years and was a member of the State advisory Council and was treasurer for about 5 years. He was the inaugural President of the District Council of P & C Associations and worked hard to

organise central circulating library for district schools. He was a member of the Albury District Rural Cooperative Society and an original shareholder in the Riverine Steam Laundry holding the post of Chairman of Directors there for many years. He was appointed a magistrate in 1920 and as well served 3 terms on the Albury Municipal Council from 1903-1937. He was Deputy Mayor when the Duke of Gloucester visited Albury in the thirties.

Also in the thirties Jacob purchased and subdivided land in North Albury into 31 housing blocks with kerbing and guttering. It was called the "Fairview" subdivision. An undated advertisement for the sale of these blocks said they were 5 minutes from Railway and new Show Grounds.

Racecourse and Aerodrome within easy walking distance." These "ideal sites [were] as level as the proverbial billiard table, on an elevated position." Jacob Brann's granddaughter wrote, "When this property [Fairview Subdivision] was ready for sale, [in 1938] the NSW Department of Housing compulsorily resumed all his hard work for which it paid him only a pittance. He had to negotiate to recover even a small amount of his costs. His efforts and time spent developing and subdividing were not compensated. He lost lots of money and the Labour Government of the day should have hung its head in shame." The government subsequently built Housing Commission Homes on this land after the war, one of the streets being named Sylvania Avenue.

Aged 73 ill health forced Jacob to give up farming in 1941, and he and his wife went to live with his daughter in Sydney where he died in 1943.

Mrs Gibbons was most disappointed when the North Albury High School was renamed Fallon High School. Years earlier her mother and brother had asked that the school be called "Sylvania" but the request was denied because there was a similar name for a Sydney high school. The remaining family felt that Brann High School, rather than Fallon High School, would have been a much more appropriate name given the site and the contribution to the North Albury community by Jacob Brann.

This information was put together from a summary by Howard Jones from details supplied by Jacob Brann's grand-daughter, Mrs Yvonne Gibbons of Strathfield, with a little information from Jan Hunter. More details on Jacob Brann are in the History Room at the Library

The question of the month was:
What do we have in common with Albury's sister city Nanpin?

Members answers:

- 1 *It is Inland*
2. *It is on the upper Ming river,*
3. *Paper making was another.*
4. *Mountainous area*
5. *Both cities have expanded from regional market towns to a manufacturing city.*
6. *Has a national highway and railways*

Answers to the question of the month of June.

Where were you when the War ended?

Anne Holloway: Dancing in the streets of Melbourne at night.

Jan Marsden: Everybody was out, everybody was happy. It was an atmosphere which could never be recreated.

Ann Brennan: Was on the Esplanade at St. Kilda where everyone was doing the jitterbug. The women wore ankle strap sandals and the men's shoes were polished. As a small child this was the height of Ann's view.

Ron Braddy: Was working at Gadsden's Can Factory making crown seals for bottles after being discharged from the AIF at the end of 1944. The boss Ron Gadsden, announced the war was over and the staff could have the day off. Some went to the Newmarket Hotel then to Kendall's Grass Court's in Wodonga Place to play tennis- but Ron missed the tennis because he went to sleep.

Mary Thurling: At 10am mass at St. Patrick's when the Church bells star-

ted ringing and they didn't stop. Everyone was crying. Being August 15th it was a very chilly day.

Doug Hunter: Was on his way to the Albury Public School when he somehow found out the war was over. He and Ron Miles used to leave their bikes at the back of Bro Payne's grocery store in Olive Street, opposite the Methodist Church. Although he was late for school he figured it probably wouldn't matter. When he arrived the students were doing crocodiles around the playground. There seemed to have been an impromptu parade in Dean Street with armoured cars and people draped all over them.

Howard: Was five weeks old and slept through it all!

John Craig: Lived with his grandmother in Newtown in Sydney. John's mother had gone to work. He was one of the ratbag kids running around pulling steel cans on strings and rattling sticks on iron fences making a heck of a noise.

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE JOURNALS FOR THE MONTH OF JULY

by John Craig

Links "n' Chains: Liverpool Genealogy Society -May 2005.

1. Journeymen- Rise of Medieval Craftsmen as jobless rate rises.

Argyle Bulletin: Goulburn H.S. and F.H.S.- May 2005.

1. Cannibalism: A tradition of the Ngunnawal Tribe.

Royal Australian Historical Society (R.A.H.S.) -June 2005.

1. "In the Spirit of the Navy", Violet Gibbons and Osborne ladies College, Blackheath, 1923-1958.

History: R.A.H.S. Magazine - June 2005.

1. Fascinating voyage of the "Tilikum" A forty year old war canoe. Canada to Australian 1901
2. Calendar of events May 2005 - September 2005.

Borderline news: Wodonga F.H.S. Newsletter May 2005

1. Some History of Wodonga.

Hills Heritage News: Hills District H.S. Newsletter -May 2005.

1. Ferdinand Charles Meurant (1765-1844) a brief History.

Heritage: N.S.W. Heritage Office Newsletter- Autumn 2005.

1. Award Winning Volunteers.
2. N.S.W.'s Top Takeaway Kitchen 1930's - 1940's

Pro Active: Public Records Office Victoria Magazine - May 2005.

1. Native Police Corps of Port Phillip District.
2. Staging a comeback - The rescue of the Regent Theatre.

The Parramatta Family History Group- July to -October 2005.

1. Parramatta Orphan Schools - 1855
2. Roll of Honour of Parramatta and Districts.

Richmond River Historical Society.

1. Life as a Tunnel Rate-Warren McBurney Remembers
2. My grandfather's diary as Florist and Dairyman.

Descent- Society Of Australian Genealogists.

1. Chinese Australian Family Photographs
2. Family Histories and Biographies

Notice from the Commercial Club.

Members of the Historical Society are advised that the Bridge room at the club will no longer be available for our meetings after the 18th August.

At this stage further meetings after that date will be in the Elizabeth Room until further notice. All members are advised to check the Notice board in the Foyer just in case of any changes.

In July Bulletin 448 there is a list of ex Show Society Members. Any information about these gentlemen would be appreciated. Please write to Max Barry, A&DHS Box 822,

Albury. 2640

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