

# DUBBO & DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC



## Newsletter 53– March-April 2021

Location: Ground floor – Two storey Community Arts Building Western Plains Gallery, Cnr. Gipps and Wingewarra Streets, Dubbo.

Opening hours: Tuesday 1.00-4pm, Thursday 2.00-6.00pm, Friday 10.00-1.00pm, Saturday 10.00-4.00pm

Society webpage: [www.dubbofamilyhistory.org.au](http://www.dubbofamilyhistory.org.au)

Society email: [info@dubbofamilyhistory.org.au](mailto:info@dubbofamilyhistory.org.au)

Postal address: PO Box 868, Dubbo. 2830 NSW

Society phone no: 02 6881 8635 (during opening hours)

### Management Committee

Linda Barnes	68878284	<a href="mailto:martinandlinda@gmail.com">martinandlinda@gmail.com</a>	President/Librarian
Lyn Smith	68850107	<a href="mailto:baretsmiths@bigpond.com">baretsmiths@bigpond.com</a>	Vice President
Ken Fuller	68818128	<a href="mailto:kfuller8@bigpond.com">kfuller8@bigpond.com</a>	Treasurer
Kathy Furney	68825533	<a href="mailto:kathyfurney47@gmail.com">kathyfurney47@gmail.com</a>	Newsletter
Lesley Abrahams	68822242	<a href="mailto:ljabrahams@bigpond.com">ljabrahams@bigpond.com</a>	

**Management Committee** Meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 10am in DDFHS Library.

Members are welcome to attend these meetings, or simply contact any of the committee listed above if you have anything you would like discussed at the meeting.

**Newsletter Information** Please share any interesting information, news of an interesting website, or maybe a breakthrough with your family history, with other members. Contact Kathy Ph.68825533 or email [kathyfurney47@gmail.com](mailto:kathyfurney47@gmail.com) if you have anything that can be shared. We would love to print your item as it is exciting to hear about our members' research.

**Website and Facebook** Check out the website and Facebook regularly as there is often useful information on them. Regular updates, with information for our members, are being made to both, and always 'like' and 'share' our Facebook page where Lyn has lots of interesting snippets.

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**Society News** The new year is going well for our society with visitor numbers on the rise. Our working bee group has recommenced, but now on Saturday afternoon from 1pm. If you wanted to become involved in this volunteer group please contact Linda Barnes (Ph.68878284 or email [martinandlinda@gmail.com](mailto:martinandlinda@gmail.com))

We were pleased to be able to hold our AGM on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, after having to cancel the meeting in 2020 due to Covid. Unfortunately, three of our long-time committee members resigned this year. Thank you so much to **Robyn Allan, June Wilson and Karlyn Robinson** who have given so much to the society over the years. As a small token of appreciation each retiring committee member was presented with a lovely bunch of flowers. They have all assured us they will still be involved with the society. We were fortunate to be able to welcome new committee members **Di Chase, Cathy Thompson and Colleen Braithwaite**. **Life membership** was awarded to long time member **Ron Everett**, who has undertaken many roles within the society over the years. Ron is still an active volunteer and is also the 'go to person' for information on Irish research. Congratulations Ron. (AGM minutes are attached as page 6)



Linda, June, Karlyn & Robyn



Linda & Ron

**Early Massacres in Australia** Further to my story in our November-December 2020 issue, I have found more information in relation to early massacres in our country. The 'History' magazine No.46, which is one of the magazines we receive regularly has an interesting article on this subject. The story also leads us to an online awarding site called 'Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930'. If you go to the digital map on the site, it will bring up each massacre with a bright yellow dot. By clicking on a dot, the user can find more details relating to each incident. There are several other interesting articles in the same issue of the 'History' magazine.

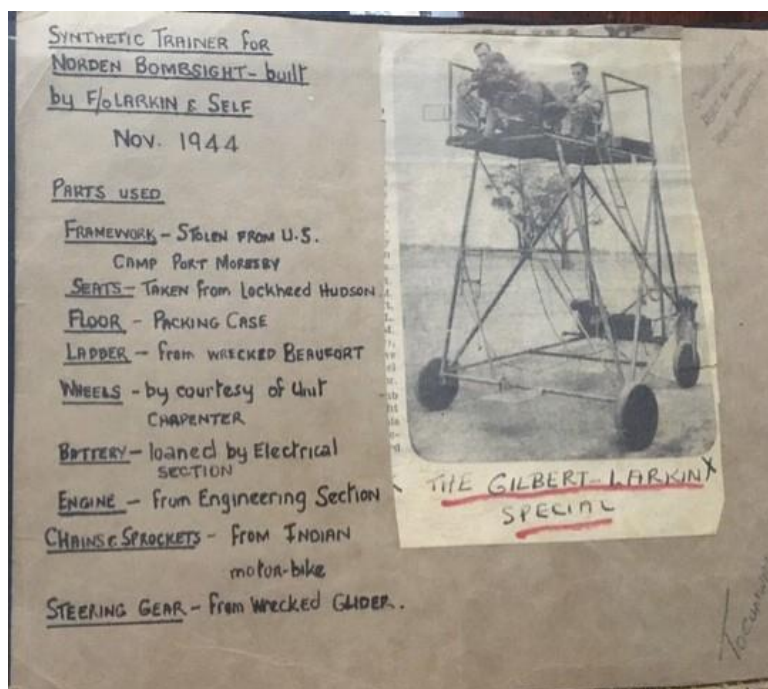
**Scottish Research** from the Family History Federation bulletin. On [scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://scotlandspeople.gov.uk) you can search the civil registration indexes right up to the present day. You can also view birth registers which are over 100 years New Book old, marriage registers over 75 years old and death registers which are over 50 years old. More modern birth, marriages and death certificates can be ordered through [scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://scotlandspeople.gov.uk) and these official extracts will be mailed out to you. It is free to register an account and search on [scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://scotlandspeople.gov.uk), you then pay for any records you view. The system works on the basis of credits: you purchase credits and then use those credits to view the records. A birth, death or marriage certificate works out at £1.50 per entry. Although not expensive, we are all so used to subscription sites where we can view as many records as we want, we do have to use the indexes to the full on [scotlandspeople.gov.uk](http://scotlandspeople.gov.uk) so that we don't waste credits.

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**Tasmanian FHS - Lilian Watson Family History Award for 2021** for a book dealing with family or biographical history with significant Tasmanian content. Please see the website [www.tasfhs.org](http://www.tasfhs.org) where there is an entry form, and further information. The competition doesn't close until December 2021, so maybe we have a member who could enter.

**John Gilbert, Engineer (Part 2) Anecdotes - the hung-up bombs, and the deadly bicycle.** With his New Guinea tour of active duty over John returned to Australia in late 1944, as one of the RAAF's (then) most experienced bombardier/navigators. He and his Pilot, Jack O'Brien, were both posted almost immediately to the newly established No. 7 Operational Training Unit at Tocumwal in southern NSW. Here at only 21, John was told to set up the Unit's first ever bombardier's training course from scratch, but without the benefit of any course notes, classrooms or even training in how to be a teacher and an instructor. He reproduced the notes that he himself had been given, or taken, during his own periods of training, sought out additional reference materials and procured whatever else he didn't have.

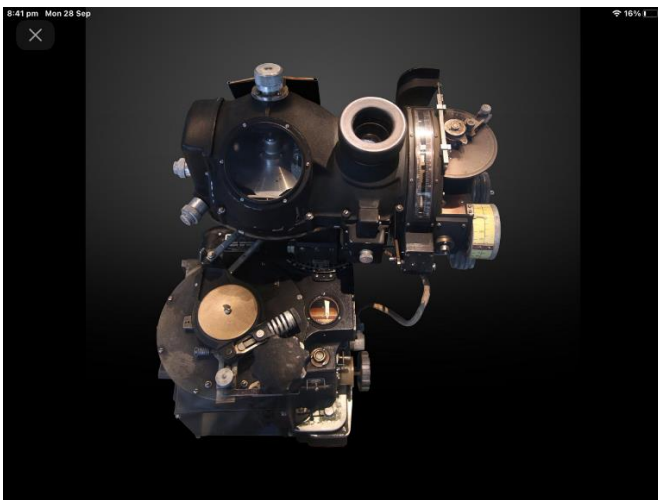
Most ingeniously he created his own synthetic trainer for teaching others how to use the Norden Bomb Sight used by the Americans on their Liberators. This was crucial to any aspiring bombardier in training for without the ability to use the bomb sight accurate bombing was impossible.



**The Norden Bomb Sight** was an amazing piece of American technology. It was considered to be crucial to the war effort, and was officially touted as one of America's most priceless military assets. It contained two electrically driven (AC) gyroscopes that maintained its downward pointing accuracy irrespective of how the aircraft itself pitched and yawed; was essentially an accurate mechanical minicomputer that did instantaneous calculations about the trajectory of a dropped bomb taking into account airspeed, height, wind speed, wind direction and air pressure; and was also directly connected to the plane's automatic pilot system such that during the few minutes of an actual bombing run over a target it was the bombardier flying the plane - he only relinquished control back to the pilot once all the bombs were away.

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I have read in several sources that the USA spent as much money purchasing and installing thousands and thousands of Norden Bomb Sights during the war as was spent on the Manhattan Project developing the atomic bomb.



As well as numerous flights with students John also had one series of VIP flights in his log book from Tocumwal up to Fenton and Darwin in the NT, and return. This was in November 1944 and would have been a bit like a holiday away from the day-to-day rigours of training new bombardiers.

John stayed at Tocumwal through until December 1944 but then he was essentially "tapped on the shoulder" to prepare again for more active duty as a bombardier.

He spent 6 weeks qualifying as a Bombing Leader at Nhill in Victoria, which I strongly suspect was no mean feat. John's particular course group had participants from Darwin, England, Italy, North Africa, Malta and New Guinea, so one can only imagine how much effort had gone into bringing such a diverse collection of key personnel from all across the British Empire down to remote country Victoria. I can only characterise it as a "Top Gun" style of school for British Empire bombardiers, and that John Bowring Gilbert was clearly one of Australia's leading bombardiers, perhaps even THE most senior bombardier in the RAAF by this time so late in the war.

After Nhill John spent a week at Radar School in Maryborough, a week learning about 'ack ack guns' at Victoria Barracks in Sydney, and another week at Searchlight School on Middle Head. HIS head would have been spinning by then I reckon.

Finally, on 5th March 1945 he was posted to No. 1 Radar Training Wing at Ballarat in Victoria. Here for another 4 months, he trained even more relentlessly on an American Liberator fitted with the very latest radar controlled Norden Bomb Sight. Apparently, the optical sighting components had been replaced with a 5" TV screen (or cathode ray tube as it was then called) linked to a much larger radar transmitter and receiver located elsewhere within the nose of the plane.

During the period March to July 1945, John did 18 training flights, mainly practice runs against shipping in Port Phillip Bay and Bass Strait, or actual bombing runs against rugged islets in Bass Strait. Often the flights were at night because of the new capability using radar. There were also a couple of VIP flights thrown in between Ballarat and Tocumwal to break the tedium.

John's official Australian Log for the Ballarat posting ends on the 10th July 1945. After that there are 22 days "missing" but from the little John has said to anyone about this period it probably included missions with American crews near Japan against coastal shipping. This could have included fishing

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boats or small naval vessels, the aim being to blockade Japan and eventually force her surrender. From reminiscences recorded earlier this year by a Wing Commander from the RAAF's Archives Section John said he was flown in an American DC3 direct from Ballarat to Hollandia, with just one stop at Darwin, on about the 11th July 1945, stayed in the US Officers Mess there, and was then picked up the following morning to fly even further on into the South China Sea area. After that there is no more detail, but his Log Book shows he was back in Townsville, the 5th Air Force HQ, by 1st August 1945. During this mysterious period John was apparently sworn to secrecy by the Americans and his own superiors, perhaps with the upcoming atomic bombings in mind, even though ratings down the chain of command would have not known why they were being so sworn. *(Final instalment next issue)*

**History in Paradise - 2021 AFFHO Australasian Genealogy Congress** will be held on **Norfolk Island** from the **1st-5<sup>th</sup> August 2021**. You can see the full program at <https://affhocongress2021.com/full-program-v1/>.

Registration is at <https://affhocongress2021.com/events/australasian-genealogy-congress-2021/>.

The 2021 Australasian Genealogy Congress will be a more intimate event, but with good access to speakers and many other experienced genealogists who just might be able to help with your brick wall or knowledge gaps.

**Researching Aboriginal Family History in NSW** The magazine of Royal Australian Historical Society "History" for March 2021 has an informative article by Michael Bennett and Paul Irish on this subject. See this magazine in our rooms for full particulars. Members may recall Michael Bennett gave a presentation at the Dubbo Library on the 17<sup>th</sup> March relating to his book called "Pathfinders" on aboriginal trackers. Information on researching aboriginal history was published in our newsletter of Sept/October 2020.

**Northern Ireland ancestors** Findmypast has released details of a brand-new collection of over 1.6million directory entries. More information can be found in the March 2021 issue of UK Family Tree magazine available in our rooms. You can search at <http://familytr.ee/fmpdirec>

**Scottish Poor** In the same issue an article by Alison Spring covers this subject. You may not be aware that many of the poor in Glasgow were Irish migrants seeking refuge from the Irish famine. Well worth a read.

**DNA Workshop** covered by DNA adviser Karen Evans is another article in the magazine which might help with your DNA research. These are only a few of the interesting topics which can be found each month in the UK Family Tree publication which the society receives every month.

**Identifying photograph** Can any member provide information on the photograph below? If you might have any suggestions as to where, when or other data, please contact Ralph Murdaca at the following email [the\\_beast01@hotmail.com](mailto:the_beast01@hotmail.com)



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**DUBBO & DISTRICT FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC.**  
**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT WPCC ON SUNDAY 28th MARCH, 2021.**

Meeting opened at 2.05 pm with President Linda Barnes in the chair.

**Present:** as per attendance record.

**Apologies:** Lyn Smith, Lyn Harrison, Steve Clayton, Helen Thompson, Mary McMillan  
Apologies accepted.

Minutes of the previous AGM of 2019 confirmed. No meeting in 2020 due to covid. **M L Abrahams S J Wilson** – Carried.

**Business arising:** Nil

**Reports:** Pres. Linda thanked everyone for their attendance, pleasing to see so many members come along. (Full report attached)

**M Linda S L. Abrahams,** report be accepted.

**Treasurer's Report** by Ken Fuller. Despite Covid we continue to be a viable society. (Full report filed and available). **M K Fuller S K. Robinson.** Accepted.

**Vacation of the chair for election of office bearers.** R Everett in the chair as Returning Officer.

Only one nomination for position of President, Treasurer, Librarian received.

**President:** Linda Barnes accepts.

**Secretary:** Vacant no nominations.

**Treasurer:** Ken Fuller accepts.

**Librarian:** Linda Barnes accepts.

**Committee Members (6) (nominated and accept).**

Lyn Smith

Lesley Abrahams

Kathy Furney

Cathy Thompson

Di Chase

Colleen Braithwaite

**Public Officer** Pam Harvey accepts.

Thanks to Ron Everett for taking the chair for the election of Office Bearers.

**General business:** Linda explained the new Cultural Program Agreement which is to be put in place between Council and our society. This was the subject of several meetings with Council staff, Linda and Lesley. Discussed and agreed this partnership will be beneficial to both parties. Copy is attached.

**Awards and presentations:** Flowers presented to retiring committee members **Robyn Allen, June Wilson and Karlyn Robinson,** as small token of appreciation for their support and commitment to the society. They will all remain involved with the society, so we won't be losing their wonderful knowledge.

**Life Membership:** Ron Everett. Ron has been a long-time member of the society. He has taken on several roles within the society and continues to be a volunteer. Anyone interested in Irish research will find Ron "a fount of information" in this area.

On receiving his award Ron spoke about the days when "Family Search" records had to be ordered. He was the contact person for this research for many years. Cynthia Foley then spoke of the history of Family Search and how our society became involved.

**Thanks to Linda** for her ongoing leadership of our society, and the wonderful job she does keeping us all inspired.

Meeting closed 2.50pm followed by afternoon tea. Minutes by KF