

# NEWSLETTER

## A Story of Two Men

*It sounds a little macabre but sometimes a measure of a man is the number and people who attend his funeral. Certainly, in AC Ostrom's case, it was his pall-bearers that revealed a story of this important Ringwood man and his connection to some of the icons of Melbourne. There was one man in particular who formed a closed connection with Albert through a major event that changed Australia, before both men kicked off their careers and rose to various levels of fame.*

Albert Charles Ostrom was only 57, in April 1936, when he died in his sleep, of heart complications, at his home "The Cutting" in Ringwood Street. He was born in country Victoria at Echuca in 1879.

From an early age, Albert was involved in the Australian Natives' Association and, with his ability as a speaker, he eventually was elected Chief President in 1916. He had a great love of his native land and his flamboyant speeches only reinforced his great service that he gave the ANA over many years. He was a regular attendee at Annual Conferences and was appointed as Promotion Officer on his return from the Great War.

He was Mayor of Echuca several times and enlisted from that town, his name being recorded on the local War Memorial. He was 38 when he began training on 31st March 1917 at Broadmeadows and boarded HMAT ship Port Melbourne on 16th July of that year, reaching Liverpool exactly two months later.

Despite being recorded as a boot merchant in his war embarkation records, Albert pursued a career in journalism. He came to Ringwood and began the Ringwood and Croydon Mail in 1924, until his death in 1936. He also ran the Fern Tree Gully News. The Ringwood Mail office was in Adelaide Street, converted from a storage shed originally built by local builder Andrew Kennedy in 1921.

After Ostrom's death, publishing of the newspaper went to Lilydale under the control of N Gill and Sons, the publisher of the Lilydale Express. At the same time, CE "Ted" Sleeman became editor. Like Ostrom, Sleeman was an integral part of the community and involved in many organisations, especially sporting ones.

### NEXT MEETING

TUESDAY 8PM, 26 MARCH 2013

**Ross McMullin**, Ross McMullin is a historian and biographer whose main interests are Australian history, politics, and sport. His biographies include Will Dyson: Australia's Radical Genius, the award-winning Pompey Elliot and, most recently, Farewell, Dear People: Biographies of Australia's Lost Generation. He was the author of the commissioned ALP centenary history The Light on the Hill, and has written another political history So Monstrous a Travesty: Chris Watson and the World's First National Labour Government.

Dr McMullin has been appointed to the Military and Cultural History Group that is advising the federal government about Australia's commemoration of the centenary of World War I. Previously he was a lawyer, archivist, and briefly a professional cricketer.

## A Story of Two Men

At Ostrom's funeral, there was a large gathering. The Speaker of the Victorian Parliament, WH Everard attended, as did the Mayor of Ringwood, Cr. JK McCaskill, Cr AT "Gus" Miles and Cr Tribolet from the Shire of Lilydale. The RSSILA was well-represented, after an Anglican service, a Masonic service took place, led by Wor. Bro. Skerrett of the Ringwood Lodge.

The pall-bearers were GR Holland, Chief President of the ANA, a role that Albert filled 23 years previously; Cr Miles, the Foundation Mayor of Ringwood who began this role in 1924 at the same time as Ostrom; Mr Stephen Margaret; Mr Sydney Sampson, his partner in the newspaper business; GF Coughlan; WH Everard MLA, who had a close association with the Ringwood press; Murray Smith; George Minns JP; and GJ Coles.

The last pall-bearer had an interesting association with AC Ostrom and thus reveals the second man in this tale. GJ Coles, like Ostrom, was a country lad from Jung Jung. He bought his father's store but, after seeing how the 5c and 10c stores worked in the USA, set up a 'nothing over 2/6' store in Smith Street, Collingwood with his brothers. From there, he expanded, by buying Coles Book Arcade and building up to 86 stores by WWII.

To do his bit for the country, he enlisted three weeks before Ostrom and, this is where a life-long friendship began, joining Arthur in the 9th reinforcements of the 60th Battalion. Both became officers, both were in their 30s and together they served for a short time in France. Unfortunately, George was wounded in the knee.

Twenty months later, they both returned to Australia to resume their lives and careers but kept in close contact over the years. It was a strong bond that often formed by mates who fought together.



1924 Foundation Council. (L-R) Mayor Cr. A.T. Miles, Town Clerk, A.F.B. Long, Engineer, F.R. Lucas, (at back) Mr. Gill and Mr. Ostrom, rate collector, W.T. Jenkins, architect, A.C. Leith, (right) Crs. J.K. McCaskill, R. Wilkins, A. Blood, W. McKinlay, J.B. McAlpin

## Lila Jeunice McRae (Nov 1924 – Feb 2013)

Lila Jurgens was born on 18 November 1924 and lived in Queenscliff until she met and later married Jack McRae when they moved to Melbourne. Soon after that they bought a block of land in Bedford Road, Heathmont for £50. They built their home and lived there for many years and brought up their family. They moved to nearby Banksia Court, later Lila made her home at Mullum Mullum Road, Ringwood.

Jack was Mayor of Ringwood in 1971 with Lila as a very supportive Mayoress. In their early Heathmont days she had helped to raise money for schools, kindergartens and similar requirements for her new community.

As a girl Lila had been a Brownie in Queenscliff. Now, in 1965, she again became involved with Girl Guiding activities becoming District Leader of Heathmont Girl Guides. Five years later, when the Outer Eastern Region was divided, she became the first Maroondah Region Commissioner. She is remembered with great affection by many leaders and girls.

Lila opened a wonderful gift shop in Heathmont where many young mothers found the right gift and their children were always welcomed with a smile and carried home a present for mum. Lila was president and a long time member of Ringwood Ladies Probus Club, a school volunteer, a book club member, and many other similar activities.

Lila died on 21 February 2013 after a lifetime devoted to her family and numerous community activities. She was a sincere and much loved 'Lady of Ringwood', but her family always came first. A woman who looked for the best in others and gave the best she had.



Opening the Jubilee Park Swimming Pool on 31 Oct 1970 by Mayor Jack McRae and R.J. "Bob" Hamer, then Minister for Local Government, later Premier of Victoria.

## News

Members Cr Ann Fraser and Terry Ahern are both recovering after recent operations but Ann is itching to get into things.

Pam Baragwanath headed into Mitcham Private Hospital for a knee replacement last week.

## 2013 Speaker Program

We have assembled some learned and interesting speakers for our meetings on the **4th Tuesday**, starting at **8pm at room 4, Federation Estate, Greenwood Ave, Ringwood**. Visitors welcome, supper afterwards.

|                  |                                                                        |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>26 March</b>  | Farewell, Dear People - the Lost Generation of WWI (Ross McMullin)     |
| <b>23 April</b>  | The Importance of Archives (Mark Grealy)                               |
| <b>28 May</b>    | Trip to Europe (Peter Fry)                                             |
| <b>25 June</b>   | Gold in Those Hills (Graeme Tamme)                                     |
| <b>23 July</b>   | Climate History and El Nino (Don Garden)                               |
| <b>27 August</b> | 1909 and the History of the Ringwood Mechanics Institute (Russ Haines) |

## Website

The Ringwood Historical Society website has given up the ghost and had to be deleted because of database errors.

We have registered with a cheaper Australian ISP and hope to get the new site up and running in the next month.

## Archives & Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours for the month of February 101 hours

### Catalogued in Database

|                 |                  |
|-----------------|------------------|
| Photos - 2,656  | Newspapers - 255 |
| Artefacts - 389 | Documents - 478  |

Thanks to all the volunteers for the time that they give freely. New volunteers are ALWAYS welcome.

## Contact Us

**President** Russ Haines

Phone: 9876-4367

Mobile 0418-103-256

11 Ripley Court, Ringwood

[rmhaines@bigpond.net.au](mailto:rmhaines@bigpond.net.au)

**Secretary** Terry Kane, 6 David Street, Ringwood

Phone: 9870-2714

[terrykane42@optusnet.com.au](mailto:terrykane42@optusnet.com.au)

**Treasurer** Peter Fry 9876-1520

**COMMITTEE** Ian Austin, Lois Aders, Pam O'Connor, Steve McGoldrick, Terry Ahern

**WEBSITE** [www.rhs.org.au](http://www.rhs.org.au)

## Supper Roster

|                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>March</b>     | Peter & Mary Le Get      |
| <b>April</b>     | Irene & Arthur Lunt      |
| <b>May</b>       | Graeme Tamme             |
| <b>June</b>      | Pam & Daniel McDowell    |
| <b>July</b>      | Russ Haines              |
| <b>August</b>    | Pam Baragwanath & Beryl  |
| <b>September</b> | Bev & Lyndon McKeon      |
| <b>October</b>   | Peter Fry                |
| <b>November</b>  | Pat Guest & Sandra Smart |

Those on roster need to bring some milk and a couple of plates. Thanks to the various members who bring additional cakes or biscuits, or add to the raffle prizes.