

Chapter III

Dr Oswald Barton M. B., B. S., and Mrs Barton

'The First Age of Elegance'

Dr Oswald Barton M. B., B. S., was the youngest son of one of Australia's most illustrious statesmen. Sir Edmund Barton was the nation's first Prime Minister and one of the founders of the constitution leading to Federation. Among his cousins was Andrew Barton 'Banjo' Paterson whose mother Rose Isabella Barton married immigrant Andrew Bogle Paterson of Lanarkshire, Scotland and settled initially at 'Narrambla' near Orange NSW where 'Banjo' was born. 'Banjo' Paterson later became a frequent visitor to Scone to catch up with his Masonic mates Mr Pulling, Dr Harry Scott and 'Geraldton' resident Solicitor J. A. K. Shaw. Sir Edmund Barton was also Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia. Oswald Barton was the fifth child born in January 1888 at a house in Mittagong 'The Hill' in the Southern Highlands of NSW. The house was a part of the Oaklands Estate owned by Henry Southey who also ran a school at which the elder Barton children were enrolled. The boys were delighted when he took them panning for gold! At this time the Barton family were quite peripatetic and had just moved from 'Fairholme' in Burrawang. Not long after Oswald was born the whole clan decamped first to Elizabeth Bay Road and then without consultation to 'Calahla' in Woodland Street, Balgowlah on the North Shore at a time when there were only three other homes and some dairy farms. It was an ideal environment for a young family but a significant challenge for Mrs Barton for whom the only access to the 'civilisation' of shops and transport was the hourly ferry service from Manly which concluded at 5:00pm. Patriarch Edmund Barton developed a fondness for the sociability of the Athenaeum Club which solved the commuting problems - for him. His eminent and percipient medical grandson Dr Toby Barton has commented on his 'condition' in the biography 'One Man for the Job - Edmund Barton' written by Geoffrey Bolton:

"I have come to the conclusion that he suffered a bipolar disorder, the modern term of manic depressive psychosis. This would explain the wide fluctuation in his behaviour and many of the illnesses he suffered. The disorder is familial and it would explain the behaviour of William Barton, also George Barton, in the extravagances of behaviour they showed.....Edmund's flight from one extravagant house to another at times when he could ill afford it, is typical.....So is his capacity to work at ferocious pace with little rest in spasms and appear lazy and indolent at other times. His reputation for eating and drinking too much.....suggests that this was a feature of depression....He was never described as an alcoholic - food was the factor and overeating is a compensatory mechanism...."



Edmund Barton with Alfred Deakin



The Drafting Committee of the Commonwealth Constitution 1898
John William Downer, Edmund Barton and Richard O'Connor

After a somewhat unconventional upbringing dominated by politics and sport Dr Oswald Barton eventually graduated with distinction in medicine at Sydney University but soon answered an urgent appeal sent out by the British Army for medical officers as part of the WWI effort. He served with commissioned rank with the Second British Army in Salonika and France and on his return to Australia joined up with the A.I. F. and went overseas again serving in several theatres of World War I with distinction. Following demobilisation he carried on his profession at Wingham for a comparatively short period. It was at this time that his ageing father offered some patrician sage and pertinent advice to his youngest son writing to him often at the seat of his old constituency:

'It is bad policy to offer servants more than the prevailing rate, though it is good policy to give them the highest rate actually prevailing. Reason: to outbid others ruins the market, but to be a fair employer steadies and improves it.

You will have stranger as patients, many of them women. Take care not to use too much slang. It does make one appear something out of the ordinary, I grant. But we may be out of the ordinary, & yet very common. Same as swear words.....Besides, no one in a community is more keenly watched, & therefore more the object of criticism, than the doctor.

He and his wife and young child came to Scone in 1920, where he practised continuously with the exception of breaks caused through illness until his passing on Saturday 4th. February 1956. In 1923 Dr and Mrs Oswald Barton purchased 'Geraldton' from Isabel Geraldine Shaw the widow of J. A. K. Shaw. This was the same year that daughter Pamela was born at Brancaster Hospital and Scone reported in the national press of the day: J BARTON - January 25, at Brancaster Private Hospital, Scone, N.S.W. to Gwendoline (nee Felly), wife of Dr Oswald Barton - a daughter (Pamela). Dr Barton had been a Mason at Cowper Lodge 295 which is based at Farquar Street, Wingham. Robert Stanley Elwin signed the Declarations Book as a member at Masonic Lodge 183 Scone on 10 November 1921 (aged 21) giving his address as 'Geraldton'. Dr Oswald Barton was an Affiliate from Cowper Lodge 295 from 25th. October 1923 and did not gain a clearance to Lodge Scone 183 until 15th. March 1934. Robert Stanley Elwin was born in Narrandera in 1900 and had also been associated with Cowper Lodge 295 where he must have met the young Dr Oswald Barton. He had to be a resident in order to sign the Declarations Book in Scone and was actually a member of Lodge Scone 183 before Dr Barton while also residing at 'Geraldton'. 'Geraldton' was to be the home of Dr and Mrs Oswald Barton for over 30 years from 1923 before it passed into the ownership of son Dr Toby and Mrs Janet Barton in 1957 following a period in the hands of a caretaker after Dr Oswald Barton died in 1956.

Dr Oswald Barton was not long in making his presence felt in Scone for he was first and foremost a public spirited citizen with a deep interest in public affairs. Dr Oswald Barton was elected an alderman to Scone Municipal Council in December 1927 holding office until he resigned in March 1951. He occupied the Mayoral Chair for two terms from December 1941 to December 1943 (shared in 1942 with Morton Anderson) and from December 1946 to December 1948. His public activities did not end there. Dr Oswald Barton was for years a most useful executive officer of the local sub-branch of the R. S. S. and A. I. League and subsequently of the R. S. L. Club also. In the sporting realm he figured prominently with the 'Varsity Rugby Union XV and was acknowledged one of the outstanding fullbacks in the State. He also took his place in local Cricket Club XI's for a lengthy period

as he also did in the Veteran's Cricket Club of which he was one of the foundation members. Playing the game for what the game was worth he was a versatile exponent retaining his composure whether in success or obverse. Dr Oswald Barton was also a stalwart of the New State Movement and the Australian Country Party in the political sphere. Whether in public affairs or in sport his gentlemanly mien was invariably in consonance with his association within the medical profession or in the uniform of his country.



Masonic Ball on "The Rink", Olympia Theatre – Scone NSW 1928

The four people standing in the forefront are Dr Oswald Barton, Miss Madge Doyle, Arthur 'Advocate' Smith and W. MacArtney Abbott MHR

Reproduced by permission State Library of NSW

Dr Oswald Barton was named as a beneficiary in the Will of his mother Lady Barton, the widow of Sir Edmund Barton. The following notice appeared in the 'Scone Advocate' on 13 May, 1938:

Lady Barton, widow of Sir Edmund Barton, first Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, left an estate of £7280. Lady Barton appointed Mr Maugham, K. C., her son-in-law and Judge Bevan her trustees and executors, and subject to a legacy of £100 to Mrs Rafferty, her lady help, and certain specific bequests, gave her estate to her trustees for the benefit of her family. To her son, Judge Barton, she bequeathed a snuff box which had been presented to Sir Edmund Barton by King Edward VII; to her son Wilfred Barton, K. C. of London, a silver box in which the Freedom of Edinburgh was presented to Sur Edmund; and to her son Dr Oswald Barton, a gold medal received by Sir Edmund from the Pope.

Dr Oswald Barton was very active both in local government and medical politics as the following press clippings attest:

The Courier-Mail (Brisbane, Qld: 1933 - 1954) Saturday 18 October 1947 p 3 Article

Grafton, Friday.

The local government conference here today opposed a motion for compulsory immunisation against diphtheria. Dr Barton, the Mayor of Scone, said that if the principle were developed in the community a 'human pin cushion' would be raised. Alderman Howarth, Mayor of Redfern, said that if compulsory immunisation would save the lives of thousands they should support it. Dr Barton said it was impossible to get 100 per cent results from immunisation, which created more carriers. In many cases a more dangerous disease was whooping cough.



Scott Memorial Hospital Doctors and Nurses c. 1933

Back Row: N. Brae-Hall, Dr O. Barton, N. Jennison, Sister Hall, Dr K. H. Grieve, N. Hunter, N. M. Loss

Middle Row: Sister Boardman, Matron O. Lowrey, Dr C. H. Scott, Sister G. Relf

Front Row: N. Graham (Hunter), N. Danks, N. Gertie Cummings, N. M. Dodd, N. Stanley-Hall

The Canberra Times (ACT: 1926 - 1954) Saturday 18 October 1947 p 4 Article

PROTECTION AGAINST WHOOPING COUGH

Grafton, Friday.

A community of "pin-cushions" would be raised if the principle of compulsory immunisation was adopted, the Mayor of Scone (Dr O. Barton) said at the conference of the Local Government Association. He added that voluntary immunisation was desirable. The conference decided to support a plan for immunisation against whooping cough.



Scott Memorial Hospital Doctors and Nurses (Date unrecorded – possibly c. 1930)

Middle Row: Dr Harvie Grieve, Matron, Dr C. H. Scott, Dr O. Barton

Letters written to the Scone Advocate during World War II also give a percipient insight into the civic conscience and profound sense of social justice of Dr Oswald Barton.

Scone Advocate Tuesday 28th November 1944:
Municipal Elections

Dear Sir

Recent advertisements in your paper, anent the forthcoming Municipal elections, have forced me to write this letter although I have never before written anything to influence electors in such elections, but the tone of these advertisements advocating the support of "Meincke's Men" insinuates the outgoing and previous councils have not been progressive, and have been totally stuck-in-the-mud.

This seems to me to come badly from a group whose members have never, to my knowledge, attended a Council meeting and have never put any ideas for progress before the Council and now, what instance of the desired progress do they put forward to the people? Why an Olympic swimming pool. This, apparently, is the outcome of years of hard thinking on the needs of the community! This is the only lack in Scone noticed by these keen observers. Kerbing and guttering? Pah! Let the women and children wade through the overflowing watercourses.

Better streets, for instance, to the Hospital? Pooh! What if the sick and injured are racked with pain with the jolting? Cheaper and better electricity and gas – what do they matter? Why can't women still bend over hot stoves for a lifetime? "Meincke's Men" don't have to do it.

Improvement to the water supply which previous councils have mapped out to do as soon as war conditions pass off, and men, materials and money are available? Why wash? But the maddest thing about all of this is their mental attitude. Mr Meincke is apparently the leader of this quartet, and so responsible for their utterances and promises.

How must those many scone and Upper Hunter people, with sons, husbands and brothers prisoners of war in Japanese and German hands feel at this evidence of utter callousness to their dear one's fates!

With the nations' leaders urging the people of Australia to put everything into the effort to win their release as soon as possible, and with the recent revelations of the horrible atrocities enacted upon Aussie prisoners of war by the Japanese, Mr Meincke urges the people to vote for his gang, and spend a few thousands upon Olympic pools and other such evidences of "progress".

Mr Meincke has been secretary of the war Loans Committee for the last two War loans, both of which have failed to reach their quota. With the mental attitude he shows in this campaign, is it not a fair inference that he should get some of the blame for their "flop"? And is this much of a recommendation for the election of him and his gang of aldermen?

During the time I have been an alderman the town has acquired tarred streets, a water supply, sewerage, miles of kerbing and guttering, a pig and calf saleyards which have benefitted both the district and town very substantially, extra parks, better street lighting and tremendous reduction in diseases such as diphtheria.

In these directions the outgoing and previous councils have always shown eagerness to progress, and an unflagging will to further the war effort in every way. An instance of the latter was to purchase the Municipal Hall, so that patriotic and charitable bodies should have somewhere to put on the functions worthy of their purpose. This has resulted in the raising of over £1500 for the patriotic Fund alone. The wild schemes of our friends can only be achieved after the war, by hitting one class – the ratepayers. At present, under the Fair Rents Act, etc. rises in rates probably could not be passed on. But Meincke and his men do not explain to the voters that if they do not get into power in the Council, they have no hope, in war times, of getting materials, money or labour for their wildcat schemes.

Three members of the retiring Council are returned men of the last war: they and the others have relatives serving in this war, and they bitterly resent the attempt to turn the minds of the electors from an all-out effort for the quicker winning of the war.

What contempt those serving in and those returned from this war, must feel for the tactics of "Meincke's Men", can easily be imagined.

There eight other candidates, four of the retiring Council, one a returned man of this war and the rest citizens of some standing.

I leave it confidently to the electors to pick their Council out of these.

O. Barton

No shrinking violet there! Dr Barton had been Mayor in 1941 and 1943 and was to be again in 1947 – 1948.

Scone Advocate Wednesday 20th June 1945:

Sir,

I read and enjoyed the report in Tuesday's issue of the "Advocate" anent the Upper Hunter Shire Council's debate on the electricity question.

It seems that the Shire Councillors are not very well informed on electricity matters. They should accept the advice and assistance which Scone Municipal Council is offering to them. It also seems that my friend, Mr Sherwood is more than a bit perturbed by statements which the Mayor made at Aberdeen with the full approval of Scone Council. Mr Sherwood's letter to the Shire Council does not prove any of the Mayor's statements to be inaccurate, but it does prove that. Mr Sherwood and his Company have not got a counter argument.

As an alderman of Scone Council for a long period of years I have given a lot of thought to electricity matters and. Having discussed the subject with well-informed people who have no "axe to grind", I am convinced that the local electricity undertaking must be brought under Local Government control if it is to render the best possible service to Scone and district. In recent years Councils in all parts of the State have been taking over electricity undertakings (after hard-fought battles with the franchise holders) and making a success of them. The average alderman and shire councillor is not a competent electrical engineer and does not possess knowledge of every branch of electricity supply economics (and unlike Mr Sherwood does not profess to be an expert); but almost all councils comprise a variety of types of men with sound business experience who are able to assess the value of electricity for a variety of purposes and to interpret and satisfy the wishes of the people they represent and try to serve. Scone Council is not an exception to this rule. Expert advice can readily be obtained by the man or council who is not too proud or "small" to seek it.

It cannot be argued that because a few men have had control of the electricity undertaking for about 20 years they are necessarily the best men for the job. I submit that the Directors of the Electric Light and Power Co. (Scone) Ltd. are so much concerned with matters of policy and finance that they have lost sight of the particular needs and opinions of the people whose interests they profess to regard as paramount. If there was no money in the undertaking the directors would be begging the Councils to take it over.

The Shire Council overlooks the fact that at its February meeting it rejected a proposal from the Scone Council for a joint conference to devise ways and means of collecting technical information about the electricity undertaking for the purpose of a report on the County Council scheme. The Electric Light and Power Co. has been asked to supply this information but had refused to do so. Why did it refuse? - Because it did not want to write its own "pass out" ticket. However, having rejected the proposal for a conference, the Shire Council decided, without a word of warning or apology to Scone Council, to meet the Company's Directors to discuss the matter of a new franchise agreement. It is reported, and I believe, that the Shire Council was influenced to some extent by a petition from the people of Parkville. Now, my guess is no better than the next man's, but how and why did that petition come before that meeting? I suggest that the Directors of the E. L. & P. Co. could answer the question.

At its March meeting the Shire Council met the Company's directors and, without consulting Scone Council agreed to extend the franchise for 15 years.; admittedly on conditions which it regarded as safeguards. In practice the proviso; "That the present electricity rates shall be the maximum rates chargeable under the new franchise" could, and doubtless would, be of no value because, as is shown in price fixing during this war, the maximum price always becomes the actual price. Also, the average rural consumer is required, before he gets a supply of electricity, to guarantee a minimum annual return to the Company: so how does the rate unit affect the small farmer?

The Shire Council apparently does not know that Scone has made it possible for the Company to supply electricity to several sparsely populated areas in the Shire, that the undertaking has been run, not as a Municipal undertaking and a Shire undertaking, but a one, and that it is much more important to the Shire than it is to the Municipality that this state of affairs should continue to exist. Speaking in terms of electricity supply, the Shire cannot get along without the Municipality whereas the Municipality would gain financially if it broke away from the Shire, or if the Shire Councillors were allowed to mind their own business in their own peculiar way.

It was not until after Shire Council had agreed to extend the franchise that Scone Council decided to take over the undertaking (either alone or with other Councils). The decision was the result, not the cause, of the Shire Council's action, and it was made only because the Shire Council was left with no alternative. In other words, while the county Council proposal was under consideration, the Shire Council sought a negotiated peace and Scone Council was forced to launch major offensive on all fronts. If some members of the Shire Council have been injured, it is their own fault, not ours.

Rural electricity supplies are not self-supporting. Anyone who knows anything about electricity supply economics knows that Mr Sherwood admitted as much when he addressed members of the Primary Producers' Union only a few weeks ago. Electrical development in other rural areas depends upon

assistance from urban areas and also upon subsidies. Prior to the war Government subsidy provided up to 27.5% of capital expenditure over a period of 10 years. Did Scone and the Upper Hunter receive any subsidy? If not, why not? It is reported, and it was said at the recent Shires' Conference, that Government subsidies will again be available shortly, but here is the snag – mark it well all ye who support the E. L. & P. Co., - no subsidy will be paid to company-controlled undertakings.

To extend electricity to all parts of the Shire – and there is no reason in justice and in the interests of closer and wider settlement why it should not be so extended – subsidies will probably be needed at least at the outset; which subsidies no company will provide from its own funds or be able to obtain from the Government. Therefore, extension of the Company's franchise would block a great part of the Shire from receiving benefits of modern scientific advance for a further 15 years.

Now the Scone Council, as it has shown by such acts as the provision of pig and calf saleyards, regards itself as being fully conscious of and determined to foster the welfare of the district as a whole and, I think in this respect has shown itself to be more advanced than the Shire Council. The people of the Upper Hunter can be assured that we members of the Shire Council will go beyond the small town view and will do all we can to further the their interests I very way possible. In this we are endeavouring at all times to act in amity and full cooperation with the Shire Council, and we regret having to play a lone hand to preserve the interests and liberties of the people.

One more point: It may not be generally known that more than 50 per cent of the shares in the Electric Light and Power Co. (Scone), Ltd. are owned by the Muswellbrook Coal Co., Ltd. Would it be surprising if, supposing an extension of the franchise were granted to the Electric Light and Power Co. by the two Councils, the Coal Company should decide to absorb the E. L. & P. Co., thus supplying the two Councils at a very much higher effective rate than if the Tamworth Municipal Council, or Zara Street, Newcastle, would find it highly profitable to supply the same electricity? I would suggest that it would be astounding if the Coal Company did not; and I would not be surprised, from what I have heard, if the intention to do this had not been simmering in the brains of certain vested interests for some little time. In fact, probably only the action of the Scone Council has stopped that pot boiling.

Yours, etc.,

*O. Barton
"Geraldton"
Scone 15/6/'45*

Mrs Gwendoline Barton (nee Felly) and 'Historic Geraldton'

There is little doubt that with a very busy husband both politically and professionally Mrs Gwendoline Barton was able to devote much of her spare time and energy to the garden and surrounds of 'Geraldton'. Some very poignant photographs remain depicting the elegance and style of life in the country throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Mrs Barton reputedly hand watered all the many trees she planted with water pumped from an on-site well using a hand pump. The original hand pump although no longer functional is still erected as a 'totem' and exemplar of the time. There are mental images of Mrs Barton with long dress and gloves carrying buckets of water.



This corner photograph shows the pitched roof of the Billiard Room at the back over the courtyard
built by the Shaws and removed by the Bartons
Note the top of the original wooden post ('column') on the front veranda



View from the tennis court



It is rumoured that a major NSW Lawn Tennis Association Country Circuit Tournament was played at 'Geraldton' in the 1930s



Afghan Cameleers made visits to Scone
The young group includes John, Pamela and David ('Toby') Barton



Motoring in style
The young group includes John, Pamela and David ('Toby') Barton



The garages still remain but the cars have changed
The 'Man's Room' on the left has been replaced by the Guests Cottage



Ponty Spicer and Pamela Barton mounted in the back garden at 'Geraldton' 1930s
Ponty Spicer married Bob Mackay of 'Tabbil Creek', Dungog and 'Tinagroo', Scone. Their youngest daughter Sarah Howey is the incumbent matriarch at 'Geraldton' (2012)

Dr Oswald Barton was a man of cultural attainments and an outstanding surgeon and physician. He typified or symbolised the family doctor of the provincial areas of the State, was generous to a fault, and his sympathetic understanding will forever be attested by his many patients and members of the public at large. Dr Oswald Barton was in his 69th year when he passed away. Mrs Barton predeceased him by some years but two sons and one daughter survived him. They were Dr David 'Toby' E. Barton who succeeded him in Scone (See Chapter IV), John (Sydney) and Pamela (Mrs D. Emery, Sydney). There were also two surviving sisters; Lady Maugham and Mrs Scott Skirving also of Sydney.

A memorial service fully representative of every cross section of the district was held at St Luke's Church of England, Scone at noon on Tuesday 7th February 1956. The service was conducted by the Rector, Rev. E. H. Victor Pitcher. The cortege thence proceeded to Beresfield Crematorium where the last rites were read.

The pall bearers were: Messrs H. R. Poole (representing the Scott Memorial Hospital), L. Deaves (Upper Hunter District Ambulance), Sergeant E. Brady (Scone Police Force), and Mr Doug George (a close friend of the late Doctor). A guard of honour formed by the Matron, sisters and nursing staff of the Scott Memorial Hospital lined the Church path as the flag-draped casket was borne from the Church. The Scone sub-branch of the R. S. S. and A. I. L. A. was also represented by returned men of two world wars. At Beresfield the casket was carried by Messrs V. Brown, A. Hall, W. Walker and A. Bell representing the R. S. S. and A. I. L. A. and the Upper Hunter R. S. L. Club.



Pall bearers included Harry Poole (Secretary Scott Memorial Hospital) with glasses
Sons Dr Toby Barton and Wing Commander John Barton bring up the rear



Scott Memorial Hospital Nurses form a guard of honour
Rev V. Pitcher and Matron Cooke are in the forefront



David Croaker, Fred Croaker, Steve Monie, Dr Walter Pye (obscured), Charles McDonald, J. F. Abbott,
Darvall Kater on right

Dr Oswald Barton practised in Scone for 36 years and died on 4 February 1956. His funeral was held at St Luke's Church.

Dr Barton's eldest brother had predeceased him and the following tribute was printed in the Scone Advocate:

Judge A. E. Barton dies, Aged 70

Judge Edmund Alfred Barton, who retired from the District Court Bench last May, died at his home in Jersey Road, Woollahra on Sunday, in his 71st year. He had been ill for several months. Judge Barton was the eldest son of the first Prime Minister of Australia Sir Edmund Barton. He was educated at The Kings School, Parramatta, and gained his BA degree at Oxford University, after winning a scholarship from the school. He was called to the New South Wales Bar in 1906, and had a wide practice in several jurisdictions, particularly equity and common law. He was appointed a Judge of the District Court in 1938, and an Acting Justice of the Supreme Court from July, 1939, until April, 1941.

Sir Henry Manning, a former Attorney General who appointed Judge Barton to the District Court Bench, said on Sunday night that both the legal profession and many personal friends would hear of his death with sorrow. "He was a person of exquisite taste in art and literature and had a rare capacity for friendship," Sir Henry Manning said. "He was admired for his tolerant and humanitarian discharge of his duties on the Bench."

Judge Barton is survived by his wife and two married daughters. The late Judge Barton was brother of Dr O. Barton of Scone.

It seems there were many common threads in this richly talented family?