

HISTORY OF ALBURY HIGH SCHOOL

An edited version of the historical perspective by Keith Crossley former Principal 1982-1997 (presented to Albury & District Historical Society in May 2006 and reprinted from Bulletin 458).

Prior to 1919, secondary education in Albury was provided by the District School and was located in the now Albury Public School building (opened in 1891). A District School was one which enrolled super-primary students for study towards the three year *Intermediate Certificate*. Such schools were established in most larger provincial centres in NSW. Students wishing to study for the *Leaving Certificate* to gain university entrance were compelled to leave Albury and go to Sydney.

By 1919 the District School was providing *Leaving Certificate* courses and the secondary section of the school was relocated on a temporary basis to the old hospital buildings in Thurgoona Street. This was the birth of Albury HS as a separate entity and a full high school with Mr J G Monaghan the formation headmaster.

In 1916 the NSW Department of Education had already purchased the land on which the school currently stands. At a cost of £26,137 the majestic building, which now symbolizes Albury HS, was completed and opened on March 28, 1928 by the Minister for Education, Hon D H Drummond. A marble plaque at the main entrance recognises the event.

In the foundation years prior to 1928 the school had its 'ups and downs' in terms of student numbers. The imposition of fees by the government on high school students had a marked impact on numbers. An important feature of the school's life in this period (1923) however was the establishment of the Parent & Citizens' Association under the first president, Mr F J (Fred) Belbridge. Mr Belbridge was a prominent public citizen and was a founding member of the *Belbridge Hague* law firm.



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By 1930 student numbers increased but continued to fluctuate, and as a consequence classifications of the school varied. By 1940 however, the numbers stabilised and the school was classified as a '*first class high school*' and that status has remained. In 1940 there were 494 students of whom 30 were in the *Leaving Certificate* class. Assisting the stabilisation of numbers in the period just prior to WWII and during the war years was a girls' hostel, located on the corner of Guinea and Olive Streets. There was no boys' hostel in Albury at the time because a boys' hostel was provided in Wagga.

After WWII, student numbers continued to rise and in 1946 a new girls' hostel was opened in *Adamshurst*, and the former girls' hostel in Guinea Street became a boys' hostel. The hostels were linked by a walking path and the boys had their meals at *Adamshurst*. Both hostels at times housed 30-50 students. At this time there were three high schools in the Riverina Region - Albury HS, Wagga HS and Hay HS; and all had hostels in an endeavour to cater for students coming from a wide geographic area. Students coming from centres like Tumbarumba, Corryong and Tallangatta were housed in the Albury hostel. The three schools had an annual triangular inter-school sports competition, with visiting students billeted over two days.

Besides the hostels providing accommodation for outlying students, another interesting method used for students to access the school at this time was the motor train. Students would ride

horses, bikes, or walk to little railway stations such as Henty, Table Top, Culcairn, then catch the motor train to Albury Railway Station, then walk to school.

Students studying Manual Arts subjects walked from the school to the old Technical College on the corner of Dean and Olive Streets for these blocks of study, and then returned by foot to the main school building for core stream subjects.

Albury HS (as with other schools in NSW at this time) had class sizes up to and over 40 students (today [2006] class sizes are 30 maximum in junior classes and 25 maximum in senior classes). In the mid 1950s a major physical transformation at the school was the relocation of the school farm from the south of Bungambrawatha Creek to the present site north of the creek. Also established at this time was the school's *Memorial Oval* with the *Memorial Gates* and *Memorial Drive*. The annual school ANZAC ceremony was held at the *Memorial Gates* until Kiewa Street traffic noise became too great.

As the post war growth continued, the school offered the full range of secondary courses for the awards of the *Intermediate Certificate* and *Leaving Certificate*. This was a stable period in NSW public education and Albury HS continued to establish itself as an outstanding educational institution.

In the 1960s the number of students in NSW wishing to complete secondary studies increased dramatically. In 1965 the *Wyndham Scheme* was introduced. This saw an additional year added to secondary schooling with the three year *Intermediate Certificate* replaced by the four year *School Certificate*; and the *Leaving Certificate* replaced by the *Higher School Certificate* (both two year courses). The last *Leaving Certificate* was in 1965 with a repeat in 1966, and the first *Higher School Certificate* was in 1967. Throughout NSW during this period there was tremendous demand for more secondary accommodation, so besides expanding the already established schools many new schools were built; e.g. in Albury *James Fallon* (as *Albury North HS*) in 1961, and *Murray High* in 1976. For Albury HS the time when it was the sole provider of public secondary education for Albury students was now ended.

For Albury HS the reality of this growth of student numbers caused the building program 1972-78 which saw the old buildings behind the main block demolished and replaced by the current specialist classrooms. These buildings were opened in 1982 by the Minister for Education Mr Ron Mullock. The Parents & Citizens' Association was the driving force behind the building program with parents Mrs Patricia Gould, Mr Bruce Fraser and Mr Haydn Heath (all former students) as members of the P&C executive.

Student population for Albury HS has hovered around 1000-1200 over the past three decades. The *Wyndham Scheme* brought a whole new perspective to secondary education in that it brought into being a whole new range of subjects (called 'electives'), and various 'study levels', in order to cater for the diversity of students' interests needs and abilities. While this scheme has been modified and varied since 1965, it is still the fundamental structural blueprint for secondary education in NSW. Coinciding with the introduction of the *Wyndham Scheme* were some changes in nomenclature; e.g. *Headmaster* replaced by *Principal*, Year 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 to First Form, Second Form, Third Form etc., then to as it is now Year 7 to Year 12 - so that all Australian States now use the same terminology.

Corra Linn was built by Charles Schmeidt, a local publican. In 1926 the Department of Education purchased *Corra Linn* with the view to establishing a boys' hostel; however it became the Headmaster's residence, occupied by Headmasters/Principals from 1927 until 1991. In 1992 *Corra Linn* became the Albury HS Language Centre.

The building which symbolises Albury HS is on a heritage listing as are the two palm trees in the front of the building. The building is magnificent and was built to last. As a newcomer in 1982, I was overwhelmed when I first saw the school with the wonderful columns, patio, balcony and two storeys.

Conclusion: Albury HS has had 14 Principals from 1920 to 2006. It was my privilege and pleasure to serve as Principal at Albury HS for 16 years. Albury HS, while recognised as a school with wonderful physical resources, has since its beginning developed an excellent reputation through its personnel. The consistent achievement of excellent academic standards has rated the school as one of the top government comprehensive high schools in NSW. It is a school which has a fine history and is rich in tradition, pride and spirit. The overwhelming majority of students and parents have a deep love for and pride in their school. The school motto, in Latin "*ad astra per aspera*" (to the stars through difficult/troubled ways) is a realistic guide to life and has been with the school since its birth in 1920.

Albury HS, except for some Great Depression and WWII years, has produced an annual magazine and these provide a wonderful historic record of the school. The magazine in the first two years was named the *Alburian*, but since has been the *Southern Cross*.

Albury people can be very proud of Albury HS and the contribution it has made to its community throughout its life. Words written by the students in the very first *Alburian* in 1920 reflect the true fabric of Albury HS and have been the foundation for all future students to build upon - "*Let us make such a set of traditions that in many years to come, students will think of us with respect. And for the honour of the school do those things which now seem to us to be for its honour.*"