

THE ALBURY WAR MEMORIAL

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The Albury War Memorial, known to us all as 'The Monument,' has been standing on the hill at the western end of Dean Street since 1925. Every ANZAC Day several thousand people gather before dawn for a moving ceremony.

After WWI, a Memorial to the fallen was discussed, but a Soldiers' Club was begun instead. This wasn't a success, so the idea of a Memorial was revived in 1922. Mr Jack Hunter produced a composite photograph depicting a monument on the apex of Western Hill. However there were lots of other ideas. Some wanted the memorial to be an added wing at the hospital, or more high school buildings; others thought gates on Dean Square would be better. (Dean Square was adjacent to QEII Square) A great deal of argument took place but the choices were narrowed down to the gates or a Monument. Feelings ran high and one person came to a meeting with a cheque for fifty pounds in his pocket. He favoured the Dean Square gates. When that motion was lost the gentleman took his cheque home!

A committee was formed of fourteen well known men. Stuart Logan, builder and timber merchant, and Louis Harrison, an architect, submitted designs and estimated costs. Harrison's design was 120 feet high and very expensive. By reducing the height to 100 feet the cost was considerably reduced. The design had flying buttresses and torch of liberty, as well as a large blue tiled cross with gold stars in the form of the Southern Cross. The structure would rise 300 feet (that is 92 metres) above Dean Street.

Well you'd think it would be plain sailing from now on. But no. Should Wodonga and District be part of the project? No! Wodonga wanted a monument of their own. Finance was also a sticking point. The design was approved by the Secretary for Local Government in July 1923 but tenders could not be let until the money was in hand. Four quotes were received and T H Bartleson & Son's quote was accepted. By eliminating the cross and stars from the design the contract price was reduced to £2,460, and with a few guarantees from upright citizens, the contract was signed in August 1924.

Adding poignancy to the contract was the fact that Bartleson's eldest son had been killed at Pozieres in France in 1916. Bartleson was an Albury resident and a Concrete Specialist. Over a thirty year period the Bartlesons built bridges, culverts, channels, kerbing and guttering in Albury and neighbouring shires. In 1904 they were involved in erecting one of the grandstands at the old Albury Show Grounds. In 1929 Bartlesons widened the bridge over Bungambrawatha Creek, at the corner of Dean and Creek Streets (a plaque on the northern side of the bridge has some details).

Louis Harrison, FRIVA, LRIBA, came to Albury from Deniliquin in 1915. He designed many Albury buildings including St Patrick's Hall, the Regent Theatre and the Ambulance Station. When construction finally began, the aim was to dedicate the partially built Monument at Albury's Centenary Celebrations in early November 1924. But there were problems with building progress and finding the right guest speaker. The Committee was aiming to raise funds at the ceremony so that the Monument could be finished free of debt but the clergy objected to the small role they were given. More discussion ensued! Finally, Senator C. Cox, formerly of the AIF, said he'd come and the Dedication went ahead. There was a 60 voice choir with the town band and the Artillery Battery fired a salute from their guns on the hill. Nearly a £1,000 was subscribed. The Monument could be finished. Then the Municipal Engineer raised the question of flood lighting. Albury's Monument would be the first War Memorial in Australia to be lit up and the installation cost £110. The maintenance would be a significant £50 per year but the Council pledged to cover that for 12 months.

There was much experimenting with the position of the lights, and extra lights were needed to counteract the effect of the lights from Dean Street. The debates still continued! Would the names of the fallen be recorded at the Memorial or not? Finally, Mrs F B S Falkiner, of Haddon Rig Station near Hay, donated two Books of Remembrance which were installed at the Town Hall. The books listed all who served in Albury and district and a page was turned every day. One of the books is now on permanent display in the Albury LibraryMuseum.

Finally the Monument was unveiled on Anzac Day, April 25, 1925. The night was perfect – clear weather and no moon. The crowd gathered at the junction of Dean, Thurgoona and Garden Streets. The main speaker was General John Jackson Paine who switched off the street lighting. A bugler, half way up the hill played the last post in the darkness and, as the sound died away, a hidden electrician brought the lights on slowly and the Memorial came into view, high above the crowd and floating on air. It was a solemn and inspiring sight.

The event was reported in the *Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* of Friday May 1, 1925:

The unveiling ceremony of the war memorial on Western Hill was impressively carried out in the presence of several thousands of people. After the arrival of the band, returned soldiers, battery and Boy Scouts from Dean Square, the Mayor (Alderman Davies) opened the proceedings The Mayor then called on Mr Waugh, chairman of the War Memorial Committee, to address the gathering. Mr Waugh said he felt it a privilege to have something to say on that great occasion the first thing the committee did was to call for designs and suggestions. They finally decided to accept Mr Harrison's design. The monument was a great tribute to his ability as an architect, and the committee's idea of what a memorial should be The contract had been let to Mr Thomas Bartleson, who had carried out his work faithfully, and had taken more than a business interest in it, having lost a son at the front himself. The lighting effects, which were excellent, had been suggested and carried out by Mr Creasey, electrical engineer, who had taken the lead in many matters. The monument would be the first floodlighted memorial in Australia. The duties of secretary had been allotted to Mr Donald Young, who was a returned soldier The committee had wavered at times, but Mr Stuart Logan had stiffened their backs Mr Waugh gave some particulars about the memorial, and said, that the cost of it (over £3000) was a tribute to the people of Albury Mr Waugh then called upon General Paine to unveil the memorial, and presented him with the key of the monument, which, he said would finally be handed to the Mayor for safe keeping on behalf of the community The lights were shut off and the "Last Post" sounded. The monument was gradually bathed in a soft white light. As the light reached its full power, a burst of applause came from the crowd, which was thrilled by the solemnity and splendour of the apparition. Several rockets rose into the sky. The Mayor then, read a prayer, and asked for a moment's - silence, which was duly observed. The key bears the inscription: — "This key is the key of the Albury and District War Memorial, erected on Monument Hill, unveiled April 25, 1925, by General J J Paine." The National Anthem was sung and the gathering broke up.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/102150128>

Sources: Paper by D L Young, secretary of the original Committee, re-printed in Albury RSL Sub-Branch Newsletter October 2006, A&DHS Bulletins and files, *Albury Banner*.

1995 Light electrified.

1999 Other memorials added.