

ALBURY IN 1886

The following is an article published in the "Australian Town and Country Journal" (Sydney) of Saturday February 6, 1886 (<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/71072967>) giving a description of Albury and District and some of the town's notable features.

Inland Towns of New South Wales

ALBURY

Some sixty years have gone since the small band of hardy explorers, under the command of Hume and Hovell, the first white men who had the pluck and endurance to successfully push their way overland from Lake George to Port Phillip, encamped on the banks of the broad stream of water, then named the Hume, but now known as the Murray. Their old camp forms the site of the large and flourishing township of Albury, or as many of the inhabitants proudly call it, the "Federal City."

What a change from the solitude that met the eyes of those brave pioneers, the town now spreading away from the north bank of the river, and surrounded with hills on all sides, the outskirts dotted with handsome villa residences whilst here and there are the bright green patch denoting carefully cultivated vineyards and orchards. During the past twenty years Albury has made wonderful progress, and at present certainly occupies a prominent position among the leading towns of the colony, especially as it forms the terminus of the Great Southern Railway, which was opened as far as Albury in June, 1883, forming a junction with the Victorian line to Melbourne. The occasion, as our readers are aware, was made one of great rejoicing, the Governor of New South Wales, and leading politicians and public men both of New South Wales as well as of Victoria, meeting to join in mutual congratulations upon the event. One of the men who had accompanied Mr Hovell upon his perilous and weary journey was present to witness the ceremonies. He had, indeed, plenty to think about and much to wonder at. Strange must have appeared his reminiscences when he called hack to memory the long days spent by him in traversing the wide stretch of country now spanned by the iron road, with trains rushing to and fro, doing the journey in but a comparatively short time.

THE RAILWAY BRIDGE AND STATION

The Murray is spanned by a fine iron bridge of lattice girders, supported upon massive tubular columns. The appearance is greatly marred by the unfinished portion on the Victorian border where a timber approach has been used instead of carrying the bridge up over the bank, as on the other side. The railway station is one of the most handsome of its kind in the country, an outlay of no less than £24,000 having been expended on its erection. The building is of red and white brick, and is 300 ft in length; the centre is occupied by a fine tower 90 ft in height underneath which is the ticket office and central hall occupying a space 35 ft square; the rooms are well arranged and floored with pine, the fittings being of cedar. The platform is of great length and covered by an elegant and light galvanised iron roof, supported by fluted columns and lattice girders. There is also a commodious refreshment room.

IN THE TOWN

The wide straight streets are much improved in appearance by numbers of shade trees planted on either side. The main thoroughfare, Dean street, is lined on either side with numerous public and business premises, the Australian Joint Stock Bank, opposite Ten Brink's Albion Hotel, in particular attracting attention. On the other corner is the post-office, a large building with considerable architectural pretensions and possessing a massive clock tower, observable from

most parts of the town. Next this is the Courthouse, an old stone building, having for its neighbour the premises erected for the Lands Office about four years ago. Further on is the telegraph office, a red brick building of small dimensions which is to be shortly replaced by a handsome structure now in course of erection at the corner of Dean and Olive streets. The Mechanics Institute was built in 1861. The front portion consists of the old School of Arts, the former hall now being utilised as a reading-room of fine proportions. The new hall erected at the back has been opened about twenty months. It was built at a cost of about £2500. A large stage occupies one end, and is furnished with fine dressing rooms underneath.

Among the places of worship, St Matthew's, the Anglican Church, is unfinished; but evidences are not wanting to show the fine proportion that the building will possess when completed. The Roman Catholic Church is a massive stone structure; and in close proximity is a large convent, of octagonal shape, with wings running out on either side. A spacious school is conducted by the sisters. The Wesleyans and Presbyterians also each possess a good church; whilst there is an energetic branch of the ubiquitous Salvation Army, who hold forth in a large building which has been converted into barracks.

A fire brigade, possessing about 35 members, was established some twelve months ago, and, in anticipation of the opening of the new waterworks, have purchased a fine reel and hose, with apparatus, which will considerably add to the efficiency of the corps.

The Botanical Gardens form a pleasing feature of the town, for although their extent and the comparatively limited amount of funds at the disposal of the municipal council prevent their being maintained in perfect order, yet the grounds are so well laid out, and the trees and shrubs have now attained sufficient size to render the walk shady, there being an avenue of cluster pines planted seven years ago, some of which are now 35 ft in height. In the centre of the gardens is a miniature lake, with rockery in the centre planted with palms and plants. In the gardens is the white marble monument erected by the inhabitants of the Hume River district in memory of the explorer Hamilton Hume, and which used to occupy a position by the river bank in close proximity to the landing stage. In consequence of its becoming damaged through several acts of vandalism perpetrated by swagsmen and youngsters, it was decided to remove it to its present position, where it can be properly looked after. The iron railings that formerly surrounded it are now placed around the old tree that bears the name of Hovell, with the date Nov 17, 1824, deeply carved into the body of the trunk. The thickness of the bark and trunk surrounding the bare place upon which the inscription is written, is ample testimony of the fact that this is the genuine tree under which probably the party camped, and saw for the first time the broad river flowing past their feet.

The gardens are in charge of Mr J Howard, curator, who resides in a pretty little weatherboard cottage lately erected. From here is a good view of the large gaol erected upon the slope of a hill, with the hospital adjoining. Evergreen shrubs grow in profusion in the grounds; and there are some fine species of the arbutus, laurel, cedar and pine, all of which seem to thrive exceedingly well in this part. Considering that it is now but seven years since the gardens were first thrown open, the progress made is very creditable to the council and those in charge.

The annual show conducted under the auspices of the Albury Pastoral and Agricultural Society is gaining favour year by year, each succeeding exhibition showing an increased number of exhibits and attendance. Last year there were no fewer than 1250 entries. It is in consequence of this that the society, of which Mr Geo E Mackay is the indefatigable secretary, decided to have extensions and improvements carried out upon their grounds. There is now a large refreshment booth erected; also a pavilion containing four rooms, one of which is occupied by the stewards, another by the secretary and his assistant, one is placed at the disposal of the

members of the press, whilst the other is used by the telegraph operators. The grandstand has been considerably lengthened, and now provides accommodation for 1000 sightseers. The Racing Club, of which Mr Con Ten Brink, the genial host of the Albion Hotel, is secretary, possesses a good course in the vicinity of the town.

THE WATERWORKS

The most important work at present in progress consists of the construction of the new waterworks, the pumping station of which is situated on the banks of the river at Mungabareena. The general features of the pumping machinery are similar to those at Wagga Wagga. The whole of the plant has been manufactured and erected by Messrs Appleby Bros, of London, who have had to work under considerable difficulties owing to the backward state of the buildings; in fact the engine and pumps were shipped to Sydney in December 1883, yet their erection could not be commenced until the beginning of last year. The engine-house is a substantial structure of redbrick set in cement. There are two pumps of the combined bucket and plunger type, and worked one from each end of the beam. The buckets are 13½in in diameter, and the plungers 9½in in diameter, with a 38in stroke. The distance from the suction-box in the river to the air vessel in the main well is 327ft. Each pump is so arranged that it is capable of pumping from the river to the settling tank or to the service reservoir, or to the latter from the clear water tank. The two pumps will, in ordinary working, deliver 36,000 gallons per hour.

OUTSIDE THE TOWNSHIP

The road leading to the neighbouring colony of Victoria passes over the strong timber bridge that spans the river; on the New South Wales side is a large brewery, close to which is a villa possessing a charming little garden; and at each end of the bridge are the custom-house offices of the two colonies. Crossing over, the road runs through very low-lying country, and is partially formed of embankments and timber openings. Parallel with this, at some little distance, is the railway. Nearly two miles further on is Wodonga, which for a long time enjoyed the dignity of being the terminus of the Victorian North-Eastern Railway. The Victorian township presents a pretty appearance, with the dark green hills in the background, the white buildings dotted here and there, and the street with trees growing on the edge of the footpaths. Buses ply continually to and fro between here and Albury, there being considerable traffic between the two places. Vine culture is largely carried on in the district, but the New South Wales vigneronns have had their progress materially retarded by the prohibitive tariffs imposed upon their products by the Victorian Government.

THE WINE INDUSTRY

The wine growing industry was first started over a quarter of a century ago by three Germans; now the annual products of the neighbourhood are extremely large. The most extensive property is the Murray Valley vineyard, owned by Messrs Fallon; the railway passes through this, but passengers are precluded from obtaining more than a brief glance of the estate, owing to a deep cutting going through the hill on which it stands. There altogether 610 acres of land, 200 of which are planted with vines. On the crest of the hill, which is formed of fine chocolate soil, is the press house; here the grapes, when gathered, are subjected to pressure, and the must is then sent to the large cellars in Kiewa street, where it is fermented and matured. A large stock of wine is kept on hand, there being at present no less than 350,000 gallons stored in immense casks, the most capacious of which are made on the premises, of mountain ash, which is obtained from the range at the head of the Murray, 40,000 gallons of excellent wine are produced annually.

Mr Frere's vineyard occupies a lovely position looking towards the town, with One Tree Hill in the background. This property has now been started about 10 years, and a large area is planted with vines, which present a thriving appearance. The residence of the proprietor is surrounded with trimly kept flower beds and paths, shaded with umbrageous trees, denoting the care that has been bestowed not only on the vineyard itself, but also on the ornamental portion of the estate. A large cellar has been built; it is constructed of sun-dried brick, coated on the exterior walls with plaster. Upon the upper portion of the interior are number of casks filled with wine maturing, whilst down below is ample cool storage room; in fact, by comparison with the heat outside it appears at first to be absolutely cold; here there are 12,000 bottles of champagne in stock. This is the only vineyard in the district that attempts the production of the sparkling beverage. Of course, at first there was much to learn, owing to the difference in both soil and climate to that of France; but the indefatigable proprietor has at last succeeded in producing a really marketable article.

Five miles from town, on the railway line, is the extensive Ettamogah vineyard, owned by Messrs Harbottle, Alsopp, and Co; this was formerly the property of Mr P F Adams, the Surveyor-General. There are altogether 200 acres, portion only of which is planted with vines. Commodious cellars are erected on the grounds, providing ample storage for the wine produced, which has obtained a first class reputation. Many of the varieties sold are made by judicious blending of the several qualities, it being found that by this means excellent results are obtained. There are many other high class vineyards in the district, all of which appear in a flourishing condition.

Tobacco growing is also carried on to a large extent, and the growth of cereals is by no means neglected. With the rich nature of the land surrounding the town, and the exceptional capabilities afforded for the successful culture of the vine and the fertile character of the country, rendering it extremely adaptable for agricultural pursuits, all combine to ensure the progress of Albury in the future to be as great as, if not greater than, that already made.

BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS

Among these may be mentioned that belonging to Messrs Edmondson and Parker, and known as Exchange-buildings. This large store occupies an excellent corner site, fronting Townsend and Smollett streets. The proprietors were formerly connected with Messrs T H Mate and Co, Mr Edmondson having managed the business of that firm for 25 years. Some few months back they decided to go into business on their own account, and accordingly obtained possession of the present commodious premises, which they had put into thorough order for the proper carrying out of a large business. Since then, by dint of energetic efforts, they have succeeded in working up an extensive trade with the surrounding district. The establishment is divided into three principal departments for the sale of drapery, grocery, wines and spirits, &c. On the ground floor there are two of the finest show-rooms in the town for fancy goods and millinery. There is one above entirely devoted to the display of costumes and mantles. In the dressmaking department there are no fewer than twenty hands employed.

In addition to these premises Messrs Edmondson and Parker rent a large store in Smollett street, where a large stock of fencing wire, wool-packs, salt, &c, are stored. Underneath the main store is a large bonded cellar for wines, spirits, teas, and other dutiable goods; there is also an open cellar, of good extent. It serves to illustrate the progress made by the firm since first starting by the fact that they then only employed 12 hands, whereas now they have 40. In order to provide accommodation for the increasing business, the enterprising firm intend to shortly make extensive additions in the rear of the present premises.

Another business place is that known as the Bon Marche, belonging to Mr Joseph Johnson, in Dean street. This has been established about eight years, the present proprietor having occupied the present premises since the beginning of the past year. The store occupies a good central position, being situated opposite the court-house and in close proximity to the post and telegraph offices. It possesses an extensive frontage to the main thoroughfare, having three large windows for the display of goods. In the interior a partition divides the shop into two, to a depth of 80 ft, there being communication between the two by means of a large archway cut in the centre. Each department is replete with every requisite for the proper working of the extensive business carried on. The stock is large and varied, comprising everything that is to be found in a first-class draper's and outfitter's establishment, including millinery, mantles, costumes, dresses, silks, household goods, gloves, hosiery, ribbons, haberdashery, men's and boys' clothing. Dressmaking and tailoring are done on the premises, there being large workrooms in the rear, where the rattle of the sewing machines can be heard, all day long. One speciality worth noticing is the employment of a hand in the glove department for fitting customers thus being sure of obtaining a perfect fit. This one fact serves to show the enterprising style in which the present proprietor is conducting his business, and for which he is reaping his reward in the largely increased trade that he now enjoys.

Mr G L Griffiths, auctioneer, first started in business seven years back, and in 1882 built yards in Olive street, but finding the place far too small, he purchased some 40 acres of land behind the railway station, upon which he has erected extensive and commodious saleyards. He also intends shortly to build his private residence near this spot, which commands a fine view of the town. Sales are held here every alternate Wednesday, in addition to special sales. Mr Griffiths also does business on the Victorian side. From the position of the town this forms one of the most important marts between Sydney and Melbourne, a very large proportion of the northern cattle that pass into Victoria being sold here.

The well-known Globe Hotel, of which Mr Con Ten Brink is proprietor, is situated at the corner of Dean and Kiewa streets, directly opposite the post-office. It contains from 30 to 40 bedrooms, and possesses large dining-room and several private parlors. Downstairs are private and public bars and parlors, besides which there is a first-class billiard-room, with a table by Alcock. There are also commodious sample rooms for the convenience of commercial travellers, and bathroom. In the rear are extensive stables possessing accommodation for about fifty horses. Now that the water supply is approaching completion, extra bathrooms are to be constructed, which will possess the latest fitting and the most modern appliances. The hotel is carried on in such a manner as to thoroughly commend itself to every person staying there, and enjoys an enviable reputation throughout the whole of the southern portion of the colony.

The firm of Messrs T Robinson and Co, agricultural implement and machine manufacturers, one of the largest of its kind in Victoria, is represented here by Mr T Whitaker, the local agent, in commodious premises in Kiewa street, where a large show is made of the machinery and agricultural implements manufactured by the firm, comprising improved strippers, winnowers, reapers and mowers, hay-rakes, colonial chaffcutters, handy hay and straw presses, peculiarly adapted to the requirements of the district. In addition to these there are all descriptions of the ploughs turned out from the factory, and for which, as well as for the other implements, they have obtained such a good reputation.

The establishment of Mr James Higgins, coach and buggy builder, Townsend street, is one of the foremost coach factories between Sydney and Melbourne, and is well worth a visit. The building is substantially constructed of red brick the ground floor is used as a show room, and provides ample accommodation for the purpose, being 75 ft long by 45 ft wide. The upper floor is of the same dimensions, and is utilised for painting and trimming. In the rear is another structure

exactly the same size; this is occupied by the wheelers and body makers. The whole of the premises are finished with fireplaces throughout, so that in winter time it is possible to raise the temperature, and thus insure the work being put together with as much confidence as during the warmest summer months. To the right angle of this building is the blacksmiths' shop, fitted with six forges, and supplied with all the latest and most modern machinery obtainable from America. The buildings are arranged in such a manner as to form an open court, by which means the work being carried on in the yard is under the immediate supervision of the foreman of the various departments in connection with the trade. Thirty five hands are employed, which serves to illustrate the extensive trade earned on. The proprietor is a large and direct importer of all materials used in the construction of coaches, carriages, and buggies from leading American firms. This places him in an excellent position to compete with colonial manufacturers. At the various shows held at Albury, Wagga, Germanton, Wangaratta, and Corowa, Mr Higgins has exhibited and has been successful in securing silver medals and certificates of merit at each, testifying to the excellence of his manufactures.

The Hume Flour Mills, belonging to Mr John Burrows, and situated in Dean street, have for 16 years fully kept up to the pace and improvements of modern milling. The enterprising proprietor, who is also owner of the Beechworth, Chiltern and Barnawartha flour mills, and the Rutherglen grain depot, Victoria, also of the Linden grain depot, New South Wales, is one of the most advanced millers in the colony, and has succeeded in producing a flour known as the "Baker's Gem," which is of first-class quality. The method of treating the wheat is perfect in every detail, the wheat being discharged into large bins, and is then passed through cleaning machines of the latest types before entering on the granulating process, the mill being automatic, every part of the process receives independent treatment, until the flour is in a finished state and bagged. The greater bulk is then dispatched on lorries to the railway station, and from thence consigned to the various destinations.

The premises belonging to Mr Wm Davidson, saddler, Dean street, have been occupied by the proprietor about three years, but he has been established in business for 15 years. In the rear of the premises is a fine large workshop fitted with all the latest appliances, both in tools and machinery, so as to enable a large trade to be successfully carried on. There are also two good show rooms, one for the display of saddlery, the other being devoted to the exhibition of harness. A large stock of every description of saddlery and harness, and saddlery ironmongery is kept on hand, and, as might be imagined, a most extensive business is done throughout the district for miles-around. At the last Albury show, Mr Davidson was successful in securing prizes for ladies' and gents' saddles, also for buggy and dray harness.