

## EARLY STREET PLANTING IN ALBURY

*Edited talk by Ray Gear (presented at A&DHS General Meeting, April 2013 and reprinted from A&DHS Bulletin No 533)*

Street tree planting in Albury commenced in 1875 following calls in earlier years for such planting.

On a visit to Albury in July 1868, Lord and Lady Belmore, after planting English elms in front of the Dean Street Court House, expressed a hope that 'such planting of trees, might, be taken as a growing precedent for a systematic planting of shade trees in the streets of the town.' Local newspapers reported in 1870, 1872, 1873 and 1875 on the need for, and the range of benefits that



street trees provided. Benefits seen included atmosphere purification, promoting the comfort and health of residents, providing shade, shelter and ornament, town beautification and render innocuous the sewerage and other deleterious matters allowed to stagnate in the towns channels.

Albury Council's response to these calls was to adopt on the 18 August 1875, a Street Tree Planting Specification. Ten days later, Samuel Mudge planted a two year old elm in front of his residence at 618 Olive Street. The tree, according to the *Border Post* was christened 'Albury' and the soil washed down with a bottle of fine old Annefield wine.

In late August 1879 Council planted a line of street trees in Dean Street. Commencing with an elm tree outside the Post Office corner, planted by Mayor Alfred Emerson, the north side of Dean Street to Olive Street was planted at a cost of one pound, twelve shillings, six pence per tree. In the same month Council, recognising the future opening of Smollett Street through the Botanical Reserve to Howlong Road, planted elm trees within the reserve.

Lines and/or avenues of street trees were planted in Kiewa Street, Wodonga Place and Smollett Street from Townsend Street west-wards in 1880. In July the following year, Council accepted a tender by Brougham & Co for planting trees in each side of Smollett Street between Townsend and the railway reserve, completing street planting in the whole of the street.

Planting in Dean Street was extended in 1884 and, according to the *Border Post* in December, the plantings in Dean and Smollett Streets 'form an important feature in the general aspect of the town.' In the following year, Albury's waterworks was opened and seen as 'greatly enhancing the town's already park-like appearance, brought about by its street tree planting'.

Between 1881 and 1893 fourteen hundred trees were reported planted. Streets planted included parts of Kiewa, David, Swift, Olive, Guinea and Dean Street to the railway yards. This scheme of tree planting was, according to the *Albury Banner* of May 1907, what made Albury, 'one of the prettiest towns in the State'. The Smollett Street avenue of trees was seen as the most important in the town.

By 1909 there were twenty-five miles of street tree planting. According to a report submitted to Council on June 23, plantings included English and Golden Elms, Silky Oaks, Plane Trees, the Box Elder, the Nettle Tree, English and Gall Oaks, White Cedar, the Peppercorn Tree, White Poplar, the Express Tree, English Hawthorn and the Claret and Desert Ash.

In the second decade of the twentieth century newspaper articles frequently alluded to the contribution street trees made to Albury being a scene of beauty. Evidence of the benefit of pursuing street tree planting can be seen in articles published in the *Albury Banner* in November

1912, January 1914, October 1915, July 1917 and, November 1917. In a review of the progress of the Council from 1917 to 1920 by ex-Mayor Alf Waugh, one of the statements made in that review, was that the 'citizens of Albury may well take a pride in the town's beautiful street trees which are so often favourably commented upon by visitors.'

*References: Albury Banner & Wodonga Express, Albury Border Post & Wodonga Advertiser, Albury Daily News & Wodonga Chronicle, Border Morning Mail.*