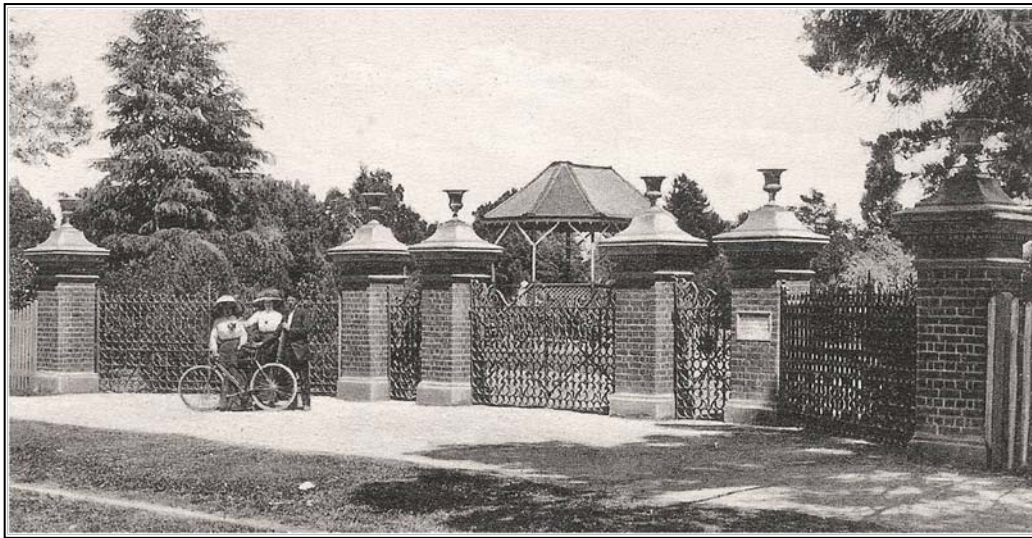


Memorial gates have stood since 1908

Jan Hunter

A new fence was installed in 2017 around the Albury Botanic Gardens. The design replicates the design of the memorial gates facing Wodonga Place. These ornate gates and pillars were donated by public subscription, in 1908, after the death of local storeowner and Albury mayor, Robert Mason Wilkinson.



The Memorial Gates at Albury Botanic Gardens have stood since 1908

Wilkinson was born at Tallangatta, in 1863, one of 16 children of Scottish immigrant parents. He was apprenticed to an Albury coachbuilder but later ran a drapers' shop in Dean Street.

A progressive man, Wilkinson became mayor a year after being elected to Albury Borough Council in 1902 and he served three terms. As well as being a councillor, Wilkinson was a member of the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows, he helped revive the town band and was in numerous other organisations. He died in 1907, aged 44, leaving a wife and five children, the eldest being 20 and the youngest a baby.

Robert Wilkinson's funeral procession was a mix of motor cars, horse-drawn vehicles and walkers. Six Oddfellows carried his coffin from the house to the hearse and the town councillors were the pall bearers. The procession to the cemetery was led by the town band in full uniform, followed by the Oddfellows brethren and two mourning coaches, presumably with the wife and children. The Presbyterian minister, church elders, councillors and council employees followed. After them came the committees of the Racing Club, the Albury District Hospital, the Chamber of Commerce and the Albury Single-Tax League. Wilkinson's doctor and lawyer completed the formal procession, and scores walked behind.

An appeal was made for donations in Wilkinson's memory and the garden gates project was put in place. The cost was estimated as twenty one pounds, but actually cost sixty five pounds when it was found that the 18 foot pillars needed to be enlarged as they were not strong enough to hold the weight of the gates. A crowd of more than 300 stood in the pouring rain when the Premier of NSW officially opened the gates in July 1908.

Robert Mason Wilkinson and his wife Evelyn are buried in the Albury Pioneer Cemetery.