

SMOLLETT ST BRIDGE - NEEDED OR NOT NEEDED

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Before the Smollett St bridge opened on Monday 17 September 1888, there was much debate regarding the unmade Smollett Street road reserve, west of Wodonga Place. This road reserve separated the 'Botanic Garden' part of the "Botanic Garden and Recreation Ground" dedicated in 1864, from the 'Recreation Ground' part.

In late 1878, the unmade Smollett Street road reserve was fenced in. This caused complaints, including the illegality of the fencing and closing of Smollett Street. To objectors, retaining of the road reserve would complement the proposed new Howlong Road, improve access into and out of Albury, allow for a carriage drive to and around the recreation ground and tree planting in the reserve to enhance the visual amenity of the locality. In support for closing the road, the *Albury Banner* argued that its opening was absurd and would destroy "the symmetry of the grounds" and it might become "the thoroughfare to Howlong Road."



Smollett St Bridge, Albury

Despite the objections and a Crown Lands Department request to remove the fencing, Council resolved that application be made to close that part of Smollett Street by legislation. Around the same time, Council resolved to relocate Bungambrawatha Creek to the west of the Botanic Gardens to minimise flood risk to the centre of the town. In late 1880 this relocation was completed. Completed also in 1880 was the construction of the new Howlong Road.

By late 1883 Smollett Street was formed through the grounds without provision however for a bridge over Bungambrawatha Creek. Complaints were soon received regarding damage to the relocated creek banks by stock crossing the creek.

In 1884-1885 estimates on the cost of a bridge were prepared while argument regarding the need for a bridge persisted. According to the *Albury Banner* in February 1885, a bridge's construction would be a "criminal waste of money."

In late 1886 the Government decided to build the bridge and tenders were called for the erection of a single span wrought iron arch bridge. Designed by Englishman John McDonald a leading bridge engineer, work on the bridge began early in 1888.

The *Australian Town & Country Journal* reported "the ironwork was manufacture in the colony by Messrs D and W Robertson, the contract price being £737. The erection was carried out by Mr Francisco Romero for the contract sum of £1227, under the supervision of Mr E O Bowyer-Smyth, AMIOE, local road superintendent."