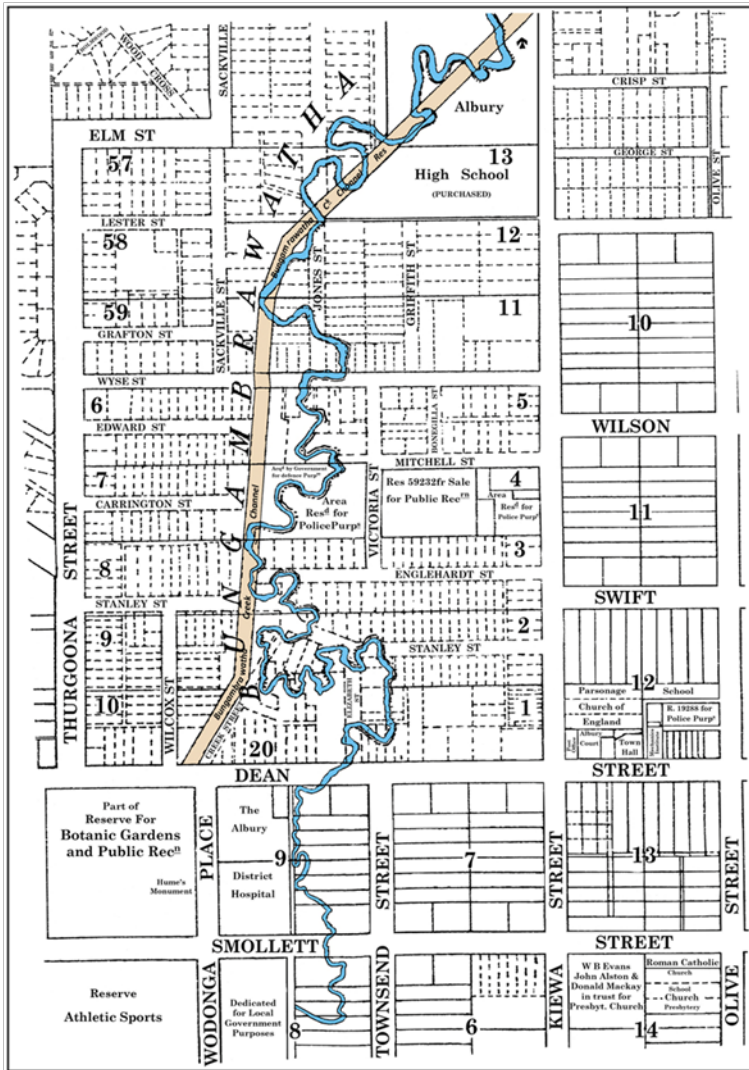


# A Troublesome Creek

Joe Wooding

The benign T intersection of Dean and Townsend Streets is our only reminder of the difficulties caused by the tortured meanderings of the Bungambrawatha Creek.



Location of Bungambrawatha Creek in the early township of Albury

Kiewa, Wyse and Thurgoona streets into ten suburban lots (farmlets). All had 5 chain frontages, 1–5 were up Kiewa Street, 6–10 down Thurgoona Street. Each had the creek as a rear boundary. John Roper bought the 5 acres of Lot 1, building the Globe Hotel, opened in 1860 and still trading today.

Townsend’s letter dated January 17, 1848 informed Sydney “These ten Lots are well adapted to cultivation, yet the greater part of them is unfit for the extension of the town as the ground is subject to inundation.”

Early Councils, the first formed in 1859, faced massive problems, not least over rates, roads and drainage.

Having laid out 5 blocks of allotments for a town in 1838, surveyor Thomas Townsend reported to Sydney “he was compelled to keep 8 chains from the bank of the river in consequence of 2 creeks, or rather breaks in the surface of the earth, as any street would have been rendered impassable.” The creek did not spill directly into the river, but in fact, surfaced in today’s terms at about the centre of Reserve Street, causing a delta formation taking several paths to the river.

Demand for land saw Townsend return in 1848, this time with plans drawn in Sydney, for extending the town. He extended the existing streets, adding Smollett, Dean, Swift, Wilson, Thurgoona, Olive and David Streets etc. In all, he laid out 36 new blocks.

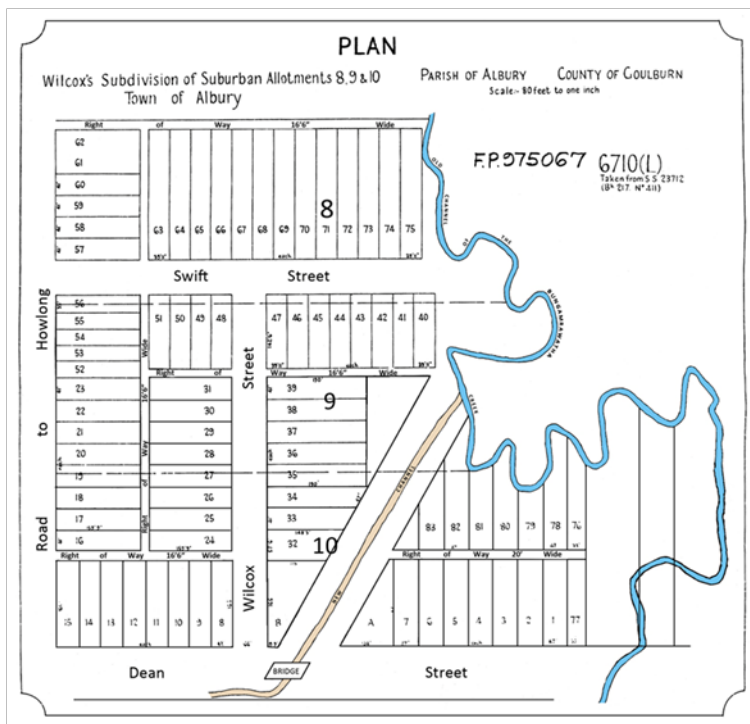
Facing a dilemma when he could not extend Townsend Street past Dean Street because of the creek, he chose to divide the entire block bound by Dean, Kiewa, Wyse and Thurgoona streets into ten suburban lots (farmlets).

First man-made interference with the creek occurred around 1854 when Albury's first Stipendiary Magistrate, Mr Heywood Atkins, who served in Albury from 1853 until 1860, directed that a channel be cut to drain the creek into the river near the Crossing Place. It would be hard to argue that much of the spade work required would not have come from the hard labour imposed on both vagrants and villains by the good Magistrate himself.

In 1860, Council cut a new channel, this time from the centre of the block further north, angling across today's Gardens Medical Centre and the Council's sewerage facility to link up with Atkins old channel, at the southern corner of the Sportsground.

Another relief channel was cut from the creek along the south side of Dean Street, across Wodonga Place and around the Botanic Gardens to link up via a natural water course to the river.

The first bridge over the Bungambrawatha Creek was in Dean Street, built by Mr John Pool for £95, completed in August 1863. The bridge survived until November 2, 1870, when the *Border Post* reported "the Dean Street Bridge, from the constant floods of late, has been undermined and is now prostrate." Council was forced to act. On November 30, 1870 they called for plans to turn the creek through Mr Wilcox's paddock to Dean Street and around the Gardens Reserve to the river.



The Wilcox sub-division of Thomas Townsend's original Lots 8, 9 and 10

In March 1871, Mr Daniel Driscoll was contracted to carry out earth works and construct two bridges in Dean Street. On completion in January 1872, he was paid £245/4.

The capacity of the new channel was woefully inadequate but at least we have a starting point of Council realigning and enlarging a canal which today drains thousands of hectares from the Black Range to the river.

In 1874, Mr R Wilcox subdivided Lots 8, 9 and 10 (see map) into 83 allotments, introducing Wilcox Street and Swift Street west. He also provided 5 right-of-ways, giving rear access to most Lots.

Trouble remained. By filling the original creek bed across Dean Street, a cul-de-sac was formed, creating a fetid, stagnant swamp, back to where the new diversion had been cut. For years it became a tip, the only plus was its central locality.

On the night of October 17, 1879 a cloud burst caused major problems. Two dams on the Black Range burst, sending a wall of water down the creek, flooding everything in its path, from Western Hill to half way up Dean Street. The overflow of the putrid tip left a fearful mess.

Driscoll's timber bridge was superseded in 1883 when Messrs Jackson, Hudson and Brooksbank constructed a buckleplate bridge, still in service today, although it was widened in 1929 and a concrete deck added in 1989.

As development increased, new streets appeared.

In 1885 Mr DJ Abercrombie subdivided Lot 2 and set aside land for a street named Stanley Street. Elizabeth Street was a little more complex but Government gave permission to fill the creek and form that street in 1887. Creek Street came after Public Baths were built in 1888.

Englehardt, Victoria, Mitchell, Carrington streets etc came after further subdivision. Ten cultivation blocks have now turned into hundreds of homes, businesses, clubs and recreation facilities. After 100 years, 12 bridges, much sweat and enormous input of Council funds, our city has learnt to live with a creek unnoticed, running pretty much through its centre.