

## Celebrating the Armistice in Albury

*Doug Hunter*

There were rumours of the war's end, hotels had been closed on Friday 8 November, but it was not till 7.30 pm on Monday 11 November that Alderman HG Davies appeared on the balcony of the Town Hall, clutching a telegram and shouting to the startled passers-by that the armistice had been signed and the war was over.

Within half an hour Dean Street was thronged with an excited, enthusiastic, cheering multitude. Never had Albury heard such pandemonium; bells tolled, railway engines shrieked, gongs were beaten, tin can bands were organised and cheers and the singing of patriotic songs added to the clamour and excitement.

Hotels were closed again for November 12 & 13, and a pageant was planned for Tuesday evening to culminate at the Showgrounds.

The procession was led by the recruiting car carrying a huge Union Jack. It was followed by returned soldiers proudly marching to the Albury Town Band, next the mayor and aldermen, then the Red Cross ladies in their striking white uniforms and red emblems. They were followed by local military forces headed by the cadet bugle band, Boy Scouts, schoolchildren, sporting clubs, the public and finally the motor fire engine.

Under the heading "Albury's Delirious Enthusiasm" the *Border Morning Mail* reported "people streamed into town ... and everything from a motor car to a baby's perambulator contained some emblem or other denoting victory ... over 3000 men, women, and children marched, to say nothing of the crowds which were 'in sympathy on the footpaths.'"



A patriotic "March to Freedom" along Dean Street on July 2, 1918. The aim of the march was to secure more volunteers only a few months before hostilities ceased.

At the showground the crowd packed the stand, then flowed onto the grassed area which had initially been reserved for school children and the band, but good humour prevailed. Those in the stand looked out on a sea of flag-waving happy people, and those on the arena marvelled at the packed stand which was ablaze with coloured electric lights erected by the council electrical engineer.

Mr Monaghan, the chairman for the night led rousing cheers for the King, for England, France, America, the Allies, and military and naval leaders. Not content, the crowd cheered them all a second time. The schoolchildren provided a musical program that included popular wartime favourites. The program ended and many of the crowd, especially those with children, went home. But others returned to the corner of Dean and Kiewa streets to celebrate further, and it was not until after midnight that quiet descended upon the town.