

Albury & District Historical Society

May 2018

No 589

PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

www.alburyhistory.org.au

For Membership Payments A&DHS account details are:

BSB 640 000 Acc No 111097776

Registered by Australia Post PP 225170/0019 ISSN 2207-1237



An Indian Hawker visiting Greenbank at Mullengandra, second from left is Frank Mullavey. On his right is his brother Bill and leaning on the wheel is his brother Charlie. Circa 1940.
Photo Courtesy: Cheryl Ryan

Next Meeting

Wed 9 May

7.30pm Commercial Club

Reis Family in Albury

Speaker: Roy Thompson

LAVINGTON LIBRARY

A CAMERA ON
GALLIPOLI

SAT 24 MAR - SAT 2 JUNE
2018

Page 2 Indian Immigrants

Page 4 Hal Gye

Page 6 Albury-Mahonga Mail

REPORT ON APRIL MEETING (11.04.2018)

Members were recommended to attend the "A Camera on Gallipoli" exhibition at the Lavington Library which is being run in conjunction with ['Writing Home: the WWI letters of Frank Brown'](#) (Albury City Council foyer), on 17 April our local historian Doug Hunter shared his insights into World War 1 battlefield letters. Doug's talk was based on the letters of Albury's own Captain Leslie Hewish.

Joe requested a show of hands regarding interest in a future visit and tour around the Albury Club which would be conducted on a Monday. He also reminded members that we will be holding our AGM in two months time and there are some vacant spots on the Committee that need to be filled.

Our guest speaker was Professor Dirk Spennemann who lectures in Cultural Resource Management at Charles Sturt University, Albury Wodonga Campus. Dirk shared his research on the immigration of young men from the Punjab region of India who came to Australia in the 1890s looking for gainful employment. "What they found was prejudice, fear, bureaucracy and depression, and a fledgling nation that was establishing the infamous White Australia policy." What they provided was an invaluable service to isolated farming families and rural workers by supplying essential goods when a trip to the local shops was a long days journey not a forty minute drive in the car.

Greg Ryan showed a short video about the events of 1918 as World War I drew to a close. The Americans entered the War and the Germans launched a last ditch offensive on the Western Front to try and snatch victory from the Allies. The extremely low level of the Hume Weir was obvious in an interesting collection of aerial photographs taken by Ron Boadle in April of 1968 after three bad drought years.

Short story writer and illustrator Hal Gye was claimed by Bruce Pennay as our local Henry Lawson.

Hal wrote under the nom-de-plume of James Hackston and based many tales on his experiences growing up as a young lad near Black Range, Lavington.

IMMIGRANTS FROM THE PUNJAB

Presenter: Professor Dirk Spennemann

The Punjabi Indians arrived in Australia in the 1890s, as 'guest' workers, to earn money to send back home. In Northern NSW and Queensland, they earned money as farm labourers. In the NSW Riverina region and NE Victoria where agricultural practices were different they became "hawkers" as intermediary salesmen to isolated farms. They bought goods from a rural store, carried them on their heads (later on wagons) and sold them to outlying farms.

This research grew from a curiosity about odd sounding street names (such as Cheyenne Drive and Sioux Court) in suburban Albury.

Why were they named like this? Bruce Pennay gave the back story of those responsible for the idiosyncratic naming to the Historical Society at the February meeting. For me became an intriguing study into our past as Australia was being forged from disparate colonies into a new nation.

You may ask why the mistake in naming the streets was not discovered earlier in the process by the Albury City Council. In the 1960s there was no approval process or regulations to be applied. If the name was not offensive or misleading it was approved by the State Government.

There were many other towns in NSW who had streets named after American tribes. From my initial research on the cremation ground at Jelbart Park I began looking at the Indian hawkers who were cremated there. In the 1890s, Indians from the Punjab had migrated outwards in search of income into several British Territories. Australia was accessible and British, the Indians were British subjects as were Australians, subjects of her Majesty Queen Victoria.

The Punjabi Indians were from four religions – Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Jainism.

They numbered between 2000 and 3000, but only fit, strong men aged in their 20s and early 30s were allowed to migrate to Australia because no families, and particularly no women, could come with the men. Their presence was well documented in the newspapers of the time with all sorts of references to Indian hawkers, mostly disparaging and vilifying. The hawkers were not liked. In 1889 the editor of the Sydney Truth described them as "semi-human creatures, the strange loathsome Indians have arrived in Sydney." The majority of the racist and derogatory comments appeared in the mid to later part of the 1890s. At this time Australia was in economic depression, unemployment was high, and complacent Australian men of the day resented these fit, young, resilient Indians who worked hard. Australian men also believed Australian women would be threatened by these virile young men. By 1900 these men had been working here for ten years and they had accrued money. They could afford to marry and to get their spouses from the Punjab. But in December 1901 the doors slammed shut due to the Australian Immigration Restriction Act. No more Indians were allowed into Australia. If you returned to India, even to marry, you could only do so with a one-time re-entry permit. Some influential Australians did not want them in the new nation.

The Indians camped at various locations around the outskirts of Albury including Mungabareena, Wagga Rd and Jelbart Park. They never camped near the centre of town as they were not wanted there and were pushed out to camping reserves that had been set up by the NSW Government for travellers. They were also socially isolated and under suspicion whenever something criminal occurred. For example, in 1898 a woman disappeared, she was last seen walking upstream of Mungabareena towards Albury. Immediately there were newspaper reports hinting at the Indians who camped there as being the culprits. None of this was true as the woman had left her husband and returned to Melbourne. Also, there had been no Indians at the river reserve at that time.



Pollah Singh selling his wares on the Upper Murray in the 1910s.
Image courtesy State Library of Victoria

IMMIGRANTS FROM THE PUNJAB

Presenter: Professor Dirk Spennemann

Hawking involved buying goods at a shop and transporting them out to outlying communities and selling them. It was a great business model for those with only a small amount of capital. If they travelled on foot their overheads were very low and they could build up to a larger operation with a horse and wagon. The hawkers filled an important role in the society of the day. Residents of rural communities would only travel to town every six to eight weeks. The hawker was like an emporium on wheels and if they didn't have something you could order it from them and they would drop it off on their next circuit. Licences were required which needed two people to vouch for you. Unfortunately, the registration books have gone but some permits were published in the newspapers. In 1906 we see that the Lebanese shopkeepers of the day, the Abikhairs and the Maloufs were providing this surety. They themselves had once been hawkers. The Indians were basically travelling salesmen for these business owners. Why didn't the Indians buy their own shops? Because they had no wives to run and supervise the shop while they were away selling goods.

Local Councils hated the hawkers showing up with their horses and wagons, eating the Council grass and leaving without having to pay any fees or rates.

The assumption in the past has been that the Indian hawkers were 'thin on the ground', that they left few marks in rural areas. However, there were many more Indian hawkers than previously thought. The hawkers left their mark on the land. They bought cheaper plots of land to avoid objections to parking their wagons in regional centres, such as Albury and in smaller rural towns. They became ratepayers and landholders. As former farmers in India, some also saw opportunities to revive their farming past and acquired farming land in order to leave hawking. Many became very wealthy landholders and respected citizens as demonstrated in probate documents of the time.

As stated earlier there were four main religions, each of which dealt with their dead differently. The Muslims buried their dead and they were often interred in the Methodist sections of the cemeteries if there was no non-denominational section. The Hindu, Sikhs, and Jains all cremate their dead. Apart from Aboriginals, the Indians also brought the practice of funeral cremation to Australia. Reports in local and national newspapers reflect the controversy this caused at the time. However there was no law against cremation at the time unless you caused a public nuisance or health risk.

Albury was the first town in Australia to officially allow cremation on a plot gazetted as a cemetery. In this regard, regional Australia led the way in accepting the cultural practices of these marginalised people. You could argue that Indians normalised the practice of cremation. Albury City Council allowed half an acre for the Muslims and half an acre for the Hindus and Sikhs. These plots for burial and the cremation ceremonies were located at what has become Jelbart Park in Lavington.

Cremation involved the burning of the body which had been saturated with butter and oil on a pyre of dry logs and timber. After burning, the ashes and some larger bone portions remained. Often a small amount of the remains such as teeth were sent back to India to be placed in the Ganges, the rest was disposed of. Some remains were buried on site at Jelbart Park, some were placed in the Murray or Murrumbidgee River. In 1935 Gharne Singh died and was cremated on his farm at Milbrulong near Lockhart. His ashes were taken to the Murrumbidgee River at Yarragundry but were placed in a billabong by mistake. When the water dropped and a local grazier discovered the bones it was thought that someone had been murdered!

In the 1890s suicide rates among the Indians was three times higher than that of the Australian population at the time. It is a very sad twist. The hawkers faced marginalisation and racial prejudice. Only the Muslims married locally, usually to European women with children who were divorcees or widows. Very few Hindus or Sikhs married into Australian society. It is thought that this led to high rates of depression and suicide among the Indian migrants.

The hawkers disappeared in the 1920s when motor cars became more common and transportation more rapid. One of the last Indian hawkers died in Henty in 1951.



Gye himself seems to have illustrated the story about the dream of a Federal capital emanating from the Cross Roads Hotel. 'James Hackston' was a pen name he used, *Bulletin* 25 December 1946.



HAL GYE: A local Henry Lawson

Lane reproduces Gye's sketch of his family home on Urana Road.

Bruce Pennay read an abridgement he had made of the short story 'Red Range' by Hal Gye (pronounced 'Ji'). The story appeared in the Christmas issue of the *Bulletin* in 1946. Bruce retrieved it from a trawl of the *Bulletin* on Trove. The story does not appear in Elizabeth Lane's book *Hal Gye: The man and his work* (Angus and Robertson 1986) because it is about place and, as her title indicates, she was more intent on examining Gye as a person, a black-and-white sketcher with the *Bulletin*, and an artist who illustrated CJ Dennis' *Sentimental Bloke* and Dennis' later works.

Bruce enthused about the Gye short stories Lane reproduces and found illustrations of two of them (not by Gye) in his trawl of the *Bulletin*. The stories draw on Gye's memory of growing up on a 16 acre Urana Road property at the corner of Breen Street the son of an unsuccessful Black Range prospector and inventor. The family left as Gye turned 12 in 1900.

The stories draw on that local inspiration of the busy road between Albury and Urana, richly peopled with Indian hawkers, kindly and rascally swaggies,

German publicans, orchardists and apiarists, and Gye's Aboriginal school friends. They portray tenderly boyhood within an impecunious family in rural Lavington at a time the *Bulletin* was romanticising the bush. Gye is a gentle kind of local Henry Lawson. His stories give a feel of that part of Lavington you can still glimpse up the unformed road continuation of Prune Street, with its gullies, creeks and mine shafts.

The story 'Red Range' centres on Mrs Popp's Cross Road Hotel, headquarters of the Red Range Federal Capital Site Movement. Alf Hodgson, plied by the enterprising Mrs Popp with five beers and two whiskies, explained that 'Red Range had much to commend it. It was on a main road, near a river. To the east were plenty of empty paddocks with only tussocks and hares. There were no empty houses because when people left, others took parts of the houses they left to add to their own.

At the first meeting of the Red Range Federal Capital Site Committee, Mr Keller (who had a sonorous voice and who could and did quote Shakespeare) was elected to the chair 'adding the necessary note of learning and dignity to the proceedings'.

Jim Pellet outdid Alf Hodgson with his dreams of the future. 'He "presented the people with a public library and a national gallery. He turned their sheds into up-to-date shops. He laid on the gas and water, provided electric lighting and named the streets after them. "As the beer flowed they subdivided their paddocks and sold their blocks at big prices, per foot and not by the acre, if you please. And after they built the town hall and other noble structures, Mrs Popp shouted a round of drinks all round and they built her a two-hundred room hotel to accommodate guests and the nobs and members of parliament. At twelve ten the new railway was constructed that ran most conveniently past their front gates and Red Range had a fine theatre where Shakespeare's play would be performed.'

HAL GYE: A local Henry Lawson

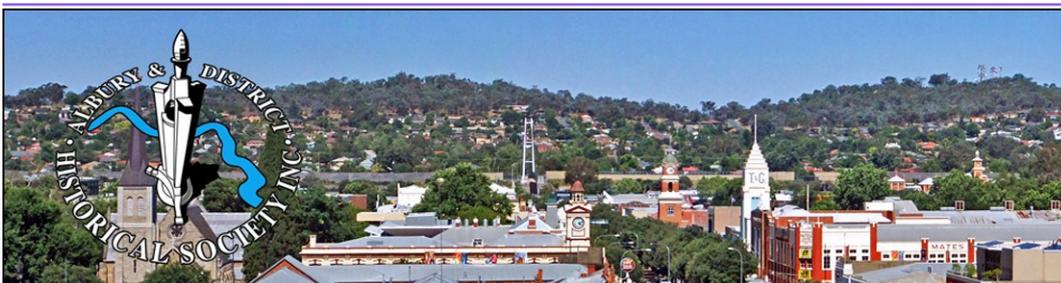
Many toasts were drunk as the committee organised the Federal Capital Cup race and a public meeting to raise funds to boost the capital claims 'and to clear the £1.14.6 already on the slate against the Red Range Federal Capital Site Committee.' Mrs Popp gave twenty elm trees to be planted along the road to make a nice shady avenue for the Governor-General to drive under and more importantly she brought in Nell. Her Cross Roads Hotel used to specialise in providing 'beadiful barmaids for the big spenders'. Nell's hair "was dinkum gold, no alloy in it, and for professional reasons she has the lowest cut blouse ever seen in Red Range". She caused the biggest rush that had ever been at Red Range. Alan Cummings, for example, queued up to tell her that "he had a nice bit of land and would put up a nice shack for her and make her happy. There was good money in pigs."

The Federal Capital Cup fund-raising race-meeting attracted young Mathieson, a wealthy squatter. As a result, the word got around "Young Mathieson's on it". There was something of a traffic jam at the Cross Roads Hotel. The overlanders, the Butler Brothers, just back from up north, came because they needed to see the new barmaid. They were horsey and barmaidly chaps renowned for their sprees while their money lasted.

The Butlers ran out of money. There was a major misunderstanding and Mrs Popp barred them from the hotel, so they kidnapped Nell. All sixteen of the Federal Capital Cup contestants diverged from the race track and gave chase with young Mathieson on the fastest horse rescuing Nell. They all returned to the hotel and the fund-raising and subsequent partying began with Young Mathieson shouting the bar on several occasions. The toasts and speeches began again. 'In the moon light one guest produced a broken concertina and played soulfully. His mate waltzed almost dreamily and romantically with one of the young slender limbed gum trees.' The fund raising event and evening were successful. Young Mathieson enjoyed Nell's company and generously gave the chairman, Mr Keller £50 for the movement.

As always the best part of a short story lies in its conclusion. Next day Mr Keller disappeared from Red Range with the £50 in his pocket. At the same time Mrs Popp presented the Red Range Federal Capital site committee her bill for £37/10/-. The thirsty committee members straggled away from the pub and the debt. Red Range lost its ambition. Still for years later, knowing wives on occasion complained of the noise being made by the underground train and all the traffic the residents of the federal capital at Red Range had to deal with.

For the story go to Trove; search "Red Range"; go down the results page to the *Bulletin* story.

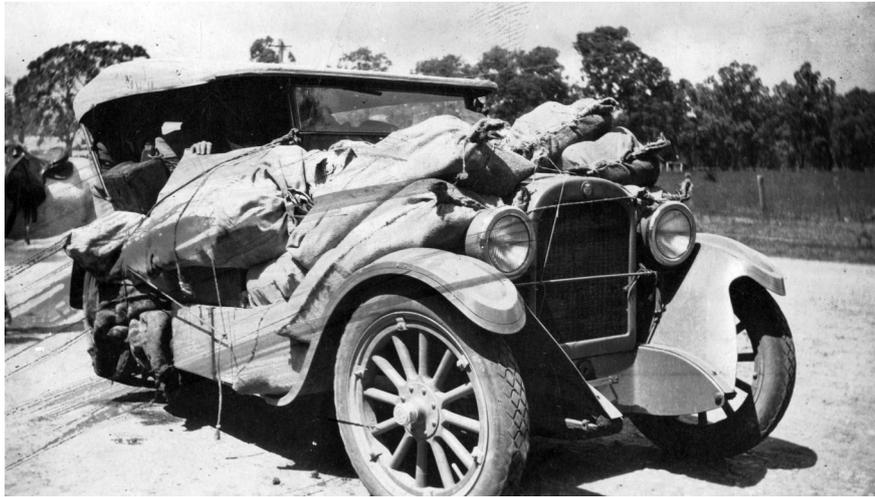


Visit our website for photos of old Albury, history articles and much more. Go to: <https://alburyhistory.org.au/>



Find us on
Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/Albury.DHS>



Dodge Royal Mail car Albury.
This model was made
around 1925/1926.

Dodge Mail Car running
between Albury and
Mahonga.

100 miles daily. This car had six
passengers as well as the load.
H Robinson Prop Albury.

(Photo Inscription)

ALBURY-MAHONGA STATION MAIL RUN

"In 1878 Thomas Everett began to bring mail twice a week, on horseback, from Albury via Dight's Forest and Burrumbuttock to Walbundrie and on to Mahonga. In 1879 the mail was carried along the same route by H.A. Crawford of Beechworth. On the last day of 1914, the Crawford & Co horse drawn coach made its final mail delivery, with Mr Charlie Walters the driver since 1890 aboard. The following day the coach would be replaced by the motor car which would make the postal delivery from Albury to Mahonga. On the main Albury-Jindera - Burrumbuttock-Walbundrie -Mahonga (now Bidgeemia) run January 1st, 1915, was a big day. It saw the inauguration of the district's first, and NSW 's second, country motor mail service. Mrs Bill Lucas gained the contract for the carriage of mail from Albury to Mahonga Station (50 miles). She had three cars for the service, two "EN"s and one "Itala" rotary valve, and employed Bob Gibbs, Whitehead and Ashcroft as drivers. Later the Lucas boys, Jack, Ted and Charlie obtained driving licences and drove the cars, over the mostly dirt track roads. In the days when car ownership was the exception rather than the rule the mail-car was the recognised mode of transport between Walbundrie and Albury and places between. In the early years of the service, when cars were mysteries and roads were mainly dirt tracks with patches of blue metal only in the wettest places, trials and tribulations were many for the drivers. One of the Lucas boys remembers being bogged on all four wheels from 2.30 p.m. until 12.30 the following day on Bulgandra Reserve and was only able to get under way again when his brother arrived with horses to pull him out. Just as Crawford and Co's horse coaches had provided a means of transport as well as carrying the mail, so the mail-car service served as an always available method of getting to Albury for families before car ownership became general." **Excerpt from Walbundrie Riverina Crossroads.**

Bert (Herbert) Robinson came from Balranald where he had conducted the Balranald-Deniliquin mail run. He won the contract for the Albury-Mahonga run for five years from 1921-1926. The service went from Albury to Mahonga Station via Lavington, Jindera, Burrumbuttock, Walbundrie, Bulgandra and Rand. (Rand was established in 1922.) The distance was 50 miles. Frequency of service was six days a week and the mode was motor car and trailer. For this service Bert was paid 330 pounds a year. In 1930 Bert lived at 562 Englehardt St with his wife Jean Johannah Robinson. His occupation was given as mail contractor.

Mahonga Station was a vast holding north west of Albury taken up by Aime Huon around 1840. In 1859 Robert Rand came to live at Mahonga after taking over the 77,000 acre leasehold from John Rae. Five years later Rand added 107,000 acres out of Brookong to his original lease, making a total of 184,000 acres held by him. In 1892 at Mahonga-Urangeline, 260,000 sheep were shorn at the 75 stand Urangeline shed, yielding 5,000 bales of greasy wool. Robert Rand and his heirs were to remain dominating figures in the Central Riverina for the next sixty years.

50 YEARS AGO APRIL 1968

Compiled by Eric Cossor

In April 1968 the drought was still affecting the country side, the Hume Weir was down to about 4%. John Baker went up in a plane with a photographer when they turned the aircraft around over Bonegilla it was very evident the Weir was nearly empty.

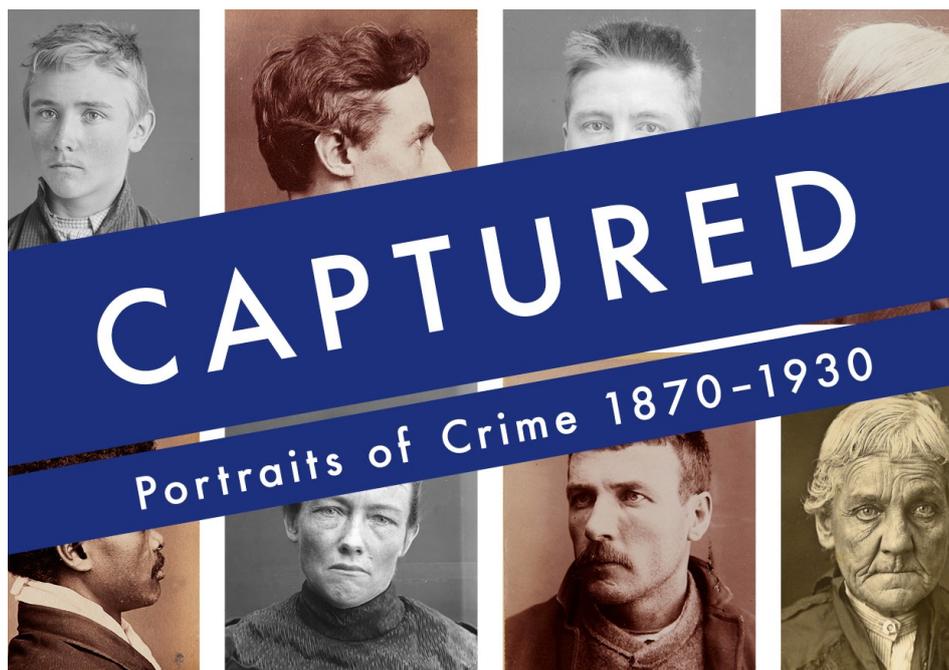
Albury High School was having an acute accommodation problem, classes were up to around 40 to 45 students.

On the world scene Dr Martin Luther King was assassinated in Tennessee. Thirty cities were affected by riots.

The Lavington Sports Club, with a membership of 180 which had been formed by the amalgamation of the Lavington Football Club and the Lavington Cricket club purchased the Divine Word Seminary in Centaur Road. A spokesman said they had unsuccessfully applied for a licence 3 years ago but now that they had a home they would make another application. The Albury Historical Society announced they would be charging admission to the Turks Head Museum in Wodonga Place. 20c for adults and 5c for children, brochures that formerly sold at 10c would be included in the entrance charge.

Albury Council adopted a works committee recommendation for a new Town Hall to be given top priority because of the sale of the Albury Palais Theatre. Mr Bunton said there would not be a hall large enough to hold large functions such as Balls and Dances.

In Sport Ian Miller a former Albury High School athletics champion won the 1968 Stawell gift in the time of 11.6 seconds. Bill Howard, a Wodonga athlete who had previously won the prestigious event in 1966 and 1967 had been scratched from the event because of an injury.



Captured: Portraits of Crime is a new exhibition produced by State Archives and Records NSW that explores the stories of men, women and children who were incarcerated in NSW gaols from 1870 to 1930. The exhibition engages with photographic portraits and descriptions of prisoners sourced from the State Archives Collection of Gaol Photographic Description Books. These historic records have been digitised, and interpreted through research within and beyond the archives to illuminate events and contexts that led ordinary people to commit crimes. But as the ordinary unfolds, so, too, does the extraordinary. The exhibition's set of compelling case studies of individuals captured in the criminal justice system as a result of choice or circumstance provides a unique perspective that makes a new contribution to the history of NSW.

Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, Wagga Wagga
14 May – 8 June 2018

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

Lifts are now a fact of life. Where and when was the first electric lift installed in Albury? What is the oldest building in which a lift is currently operating?

ANSWER TO THE FEBRUARY QUESTION OF THE MONTH

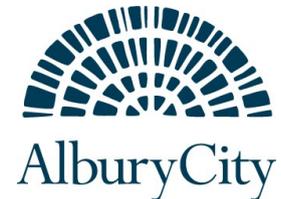
In February 1947, the first six Housing Commission homes were completed in Albury. Where were they, who was the builder and how much was the weekly rental?

The homes were all in Glenly Street, commencing at 365. The builder was Mr FW Lemcke. Rental was 35 shillings a week, payable at the Albury Court House. Architect Mr Albert Hanson, Sydney. The first tenants were Mr & Mrs TS Hooper and two children. Three of the homes had two bedrooms plus a verandah, three had two bedrooms plus sleepout and a verandah.



A&DHS Corporate Sponsors

Albury & District Historical Society receives generous support from the following sponsors. Please click on the logo to visit their respective websites.



Special thanks to the Commercial Club Albury Ltd for supplying a meeting room for many years and also for their continued support. Please click on the logo to access their website.

Disclaimer:

The Albury & District Historical Society Inc., and/or its members, through this newsletter, endeavours to provide accurate and reliable information, but does not warrant or make any representation regarding the accuracy or reliability of information contained within this newsletter.

To the maximum extent permitted by applicable law, the Society and/or its members shall not be liable for any damages of any kind relating to the use of this information, including without limitation, direct, indirect, special, compensatory or consequential damages, loss of profits or damage to property, even if the Society and/or its members have been advised of the possibility of such damages.

Patron: Patricia Gould OAM

Honorary Life Members:

Howard Jones, Helen Livsey, June Shanahan, Jan Hunter.

President: Joe Wooding

Vice-President: Greg Ryan

Secretary: Helen Livsey

02 6021 3671

Treasurer: Ron Haberfield

Minute Secretary: Jill Wooding

Publicity Officer: Jill Wooding

Public Officer: Helen Livsey

Committee: Richard Lee, Doug Hunter, Marion Taylor, Eric Cossor.

Bulletin Editor: Marion Taylor
marion.taylor7@bigpond.com

Publications & Stock Officer: Ray Gear

Bulletin dispatch: Richard Lee

Meeting Greeter: Jill Wooding

Webmaster: Greg Ryan

Meetings: Second Wednesday of the month at 7.30 pm usually at the Commercial Club Albury.

The Committee meets on the third Wednesday of the month at 3 pm at the Albury Library Museum.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$25 Family: \$33

Corporate: \$100

Note: There is a \$10 surcharge for mailed Bulletins.

Research undertaken, \$25 first hour. Enquiries in writing with \$25