

## Albury Celebrates New Year

*Greg Ryan*

The *Albury Banner* reported in 1875 that “on New Year’s Eve, the members of the Albury Brass Band took a turn round the town, and performed music in a highly creditable manner in different parts of the town.”

By the 1890s it had become a tradition which lasted until the 1960s for the band to play on the corner of Dean and Kiewa streets as part of the celebrations. The *Banner* told its readers in 1896 “the night being moonlight, there was a large muster in the street. The Town Band played a number of musical selections on the balcony of the Globe Hotel, and the principal thoroughfares were thronged until a late hour.”

The band would play at a central venue (the Botanic Gardens, the sportsground or the Theatre Royal) before “thronges of locals” would follow them to the Post Office corner where they played on from about 11 pm, usually under the gaslight in the middle of the street.

At the stroke of the Post Office clock at midnight, Albury people linked hands, singing ‘Auld Lang Syne,’ there was much cheering, and “the noise of fire bells, not to mention the prolonged screeching of train whistles, all played a part in welcoming in the New Year.”

The celebrations continued into the early hours, the *Banner* reporting in 1902 that the band “visited various parts of the town and played selections of dance music up to 2 pm.” In later years, they retired to the Palais Royal where the music played on.



Waiting for the Albury Post Office clock to strike midnight,  
New Year’s Eve circa 1960

Albury second brass band, the Albury Citizen's Band were also part of the action. They would play on the balcony of the Australian Hotel in Townsend street before moving to the Dean and Olive street corner.

Celebration in war time was more subdued, the *Border Morning Mail* telling its readers in 1916 that "on all sides were to be heard the fervent wish that 1916 would see the world's great war end."

The celebrating continued on New Year's Day. In 1906 the *Banner* reported that "many local people attended the races and sports at Jindera, Chiltern, Wangaratta and Beechworth," and in 1918 "the Botanic Gardens was deservedly popular, and a more enjoyable day's outing in the shade of the shrubs and palms could not have been wished for." In 1935, again in the *Banner*, "at Noreuil Park the swimming beach at times was crowded with bathers ... others took part in district tennis tournaments."