

## Albury Municipal Baths

*Greg Ryan*

In the forty years prior to 1887, an average of approximately two swimmers drowned every year in and around the Murray River at Albury – it is not surprising that the people of Albury agitated strongly for public baths.

In August 1887, a tender of £592 was accepted for 'Albury Municipal Baths' to be built in the vicinity of the present Gertrude Colquhoun Park on Creek Street.

Albury Council published thirteen by-laws for use of the baths, including: gentleman to bathe from 5am to 8am and 4pm to 8pm while ladies had use of the baths from 8.30am to 4pm; not open on Sundays; no person shall use the baths for more than one hour at a time; no smoking.

The baths opened for the first time on Friday, November 2, 1888, the Council having appointed Mr John T Jones as caretaker on a salary of two shillings per week. Mr Jones reported to Council that for the first five days "there was an attendance of 245 boys and 150 adults."

In 1893 Mr Graham Brougham and his sister Elizabeth were lessees, he supervising gentlemen's bathing and she in charge of the ladies. The *Border Post* noted that "the water is frequently renewed" and "a 'bucking horse' is provided and the attempts by bathers to ride the 'horse' are most mirth provoking."

By 1912 Mr L V Harris was lessee and the rules re segregated bathing had been slightly relaxed with so-called "Continental Bathing" held regularly. The *Border Morning Mail* reported that "a large number of ladies and gentlemen enjoyed the pleasures of a swim ... bathers and onlookers admitted for 6d each ... ladies' dressing rooms are provided on one side of the baths and



The first pool on the same site as Albury's current swimming pool, opened in 1929.

gentlemen's on the other. Towels and trunks are obtainable at the baths, and a female and male attendant are in charge."

## SWIMMING CHAMPIONS OF THE PAST



*Border Morning Mail*  
February 2, 1959

The team members, left to right: Back row, Les "Skeeta" Wynack, Archie Johnson, Bill Washington, Charlie Eustace; front row, Harold Roxburgh, Les Malcolm (captain) and Fred "Dandy" Jacobs.

Taken in 1928, this picture portrays one of the most talented swimming teams to ever represent Albury in inter-town contests.

The photograph was taken after the team had triumphantly returned from Wagga with the Maple Cup (shown in foreground), which was the "premiership" trophy of the times. All members of the team were credited with near or better than 60 seconds for 100 yards which was fast going for those days of slower swimming.

Stars of the team were Fred Jacobs and Harold Roxburgh and the year was a particularly auspicious one for the former who won the distinction of being the only Albury swimmer to ever win a national title that season.

At the age of 14, Fred Jacobs won the under 15 100 yards and the under 16 220 yards championships of NSW and followed this with the NSW junior 100 yards title in 1928. He was selected to represent NSW at the national championships in Brisbane and in a blaze of glory took the honors in the junior Australian 100 yards championship. He was spoken of as a distinct Olympic Games representative, but ill-health forced a premature retirement from the sport.

Harold Roxburgh was a perfect exponent of the art of relaxation and in his heyday was undefeated 50 and 100 yards Riverina champion for a five year period. He was the first Albury swimmer to break a minute for the 100 yards distance.

## OFFICIAL OPENING OF OLYMPIC POOL

**Carried Out By The Mayor**

**FAST TIMES IN SWIMMING EVENTS**

**Allan Strang Equals Record For Albury Pool**

The new tiled and chlorinated Albury Olympic Pool was officially opened last night by the Mayor (Ald. D. G. Padman), at a successful swimming carnival arranged by the Amateur Swimming Club. About £32 was taken at the gate.

Opening the pool, Ald. Padman said that looking back and having in mind the old pool—a plain concrete construction liable to hold impurities and collect slime—they were now presented with a very different thing. Once the old pool had been filled it had to stand the effects of the constant use until it could be emptied, scrubbed and refilled.

In comparison, they now had a tiled basin, filled with crystal clear water, chemically made pure and subject to continual filtration. It would bring to them a feeling of general satisfaction that council had seen fit to carry out such a construction, and he felt it would completely justify the expenditure.

*Border Morning Mail*  
February 21, 1940

It had become apparent that Albury had 'outgrown' the baths. In the early 1920s, newspaper reports focused on overcrowding and poor sanitary conditions.

North Albury P&C Progress Association proposed a pool at Billson's Park as "more suitable and serve a greater number of ratepayers."

A new pool (photo page 1), built by Thomas Bartleson (who also constructed Albury's War Memorial) and costing over £3000, located adjacent to the Albury Sportsground, was hailed as the "best swimming pool in the country." It opened on October 26, 1929. Harold Roxburgh was the first lessee (he was still lessee in the mid-1960s). The pool was described as "most hygienic" with "fresh water pumped from the Murray River at regular intervals" (in 1938/39 the water was changed daily).

In February 1940 the pool was rebuilt to Olympic standard, tiled and chlorinated and re-opened by mayor

Alderman Padman. Albury Municipal Engineer Mr Jack Sarvaas designed the pool and construction was completed under his supervision.

In 1992 this pool was demolished and a new Albury Swimming Centre constructed.

## Old pool to go out with a splash

Swimmers are being invited to bid farewell to Albury's old Olympic swimming pool.

The pool is to be demolished and replaced with a new swimming complex.

The Albury Amateur Swimming Club will hold a farewell night to the old pool on Friday night.

A club spokesperson said the function would be held at the club rooms and swimming pool.

"All past members and interested persons are invited to join our night of nostalgia and to view the memorabilia of our club's history," he said.

"A highlight of the night will be the presentation of the 'Champion Board' which was donated by the club's women's auxiliary in 1950.

"If the weather permits there will be swims by past and present members, as well as some relay events."

A barbecue tea would be provided although a donation would be required to cover costs.

Anyone interested in attending or requiring more information should contact Mr Trevor Inglis by phoning 23 9419 during business hours or 21 2241 after hours.

*Twin Cities Post*

March 4, 1992

