

Albury & District Historical Society Inc

November 2019

No 606

PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

<https://alburyhistory.org.au/>

For Your Reference A&DHS account details are:

BSB 640 000 Acc No 111097776

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



Next Meeting

Wednesday, November 13
7:30 pm, Commercial Club
Engineering aspects and
benefits from construction of
Hume Dam

Speaker: Graeme Hind



Three local ladies 'of refugee background.'

**ALBURY
LIBRARYMUSEUM**
**Aftermath of First World
War—starts November 11
until January 26**

Page 2 Refugees in Albury
Page 3 Memorial Uiver
Page 4 Hume Dam Centenary
Page 8 Fifty Years Ago

REPORT ON OCTOBER MEETING (09.10.2019)

President Greg Ryan reported to the meeting on the status of our Society's objection submitted to Albury City Council re the development of *Meramie* at 595 Kiewa St. He outlined the principal points made in our submission – in summary: the building's heritage value remains high, with no change from a street perspective since it was first listed, if worthy of heritage listing then it is still worthy now; its key associations with Albury's rural, social and medical history; the proposed replacement buildings will not fit well with the rest of the precinct; the owners must have known of the building's heritage listing when they purchased the property and the risk that development would not be allowed. We are hopeful that our objection and others will add enough weight to see the application rejected.

Dr Penny Vine was our guest speaker, telling us about some of the hurdles faced by newly arrived refugees from African countries and from Bhutan as they adjust to life in Australia. She made the point that they were no longer refugees but locals with a refugee background. Penny highlighted some of the challenges they faced in their home countries before coming to our area. She then related some stories of their success in adapting to life in Albury Wodonga, with contributions from the audience.

The meeting then heard from Bruce Pennay, outlining how the Society is preparing for the Centenary of turning the first sod at the Hume Dam. Bruce pointed out that the story of Hume Dam falls conventionally within four frames: stories of political achievement, engineering achievement, environmental challenge and stories of living with the Hume Dam.

Richard Lee rounded off the meeting with his regular segment relating some of what was happening in Albury 50 years ago – his abridged report is on page 8.

Dr Penny Vine began working as a counsellor with newly arrived refugees from Bosnia and Iran in 1999. Penny is the current President of Murray Valley Sanctuary Refugee Group.

As we know there is a strong history of settlement in this region but active encouragement of refugees to settle away from the cities did not start until the 1980's. Before that, settlement of new arrivals in regional areas was ad hoc, not part of a deliberate Government policy

The Integrated Humanitarian Settlement Scheme began in the 1980's and involved the linking with community groups who supported the new arrivals and ensured successful assimilation (as it was called then). The current political promise is for 40% of overseas arrivals (migrant and refugee) to be settled in regional areas, but there will need to be back-up support to ensure that it is successful.

In 2019 there are 71 million people in the world displaced from their homes because of conflict or natural disasters. 26 million of these are refugees and 2 million are asylum seekers. More than two thirds of forcibly displaced people are still within their country of origin and do not come under United Nations High Commission for Refugees' (UNHCR's) jurisdiction.

Refugees are people, outside their country of origin, who cannot return due to a fear of persecution because of their membership of a political or social group. Asylum seekers are people who are claiming to be refugees but who have not yet been processed against the refugee status criteria.

"Refugee" is a political term. It is a label to enable people to cross a boundary and is a transient designation similar to bridegroom or new graduate. "People of refugee background" or "new settlers" are more appropriate titles.

Settlement of refugees is currently about 16,000 per year. UNHCR refers one third, such as the 2,000 Bhutanese who have settled in our region. This visa, (visa 200), involves people that are at risk but do not have links to any particular part of the world. Our local Bhutanese heritage families have lived in Nepal for 20 years and have come as an existing community, which has added to the success of their settlement.

Another third of new arrivals are sponsored by family or organisations, the 202 visa. Families sponsor close relatives or groups such as Murray Valley Sanctuary Refugee Group sponsor people who are in danger where they are living but do not have existing links to Australia. Less than 1% of people needing settlement in a third country are actually accepted by a small number of nations. USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Chile and Scandinavia are the main countries that deliberately take in refugees. Most refugees find themselves in neighbouring countries with little hope of a future life. Most are the third world nations, such as Pakistan with 16 million refugees.



A group of women 'of refugee background' enjoying themselves 'Harmony Day,' March 2019

Women at risk, without a male protector, visa 204, are a smaller fraction of the intake. Generally, with children to care for, this group makes up a significant proportion of the Government sponsored people settling in Albury Wodonga.

In addition to the Bhutanese settlers, who began arriving in 2008, the other large group of new arrivals are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo – 500 so far and more on their way.

The families settling here are keen to see the rest of their kin as safe as they are. With food and shelter and a future here, knowing that close family do not have these benefits is hard to bear. Soon after arrival, many

people seek out the information on how to get visas for the ones still in camps – children, parents, brothers and sister, nephews and nieces.

The strict process, the emphasis on proof of identity and having refugee status, means that many applications are rejected. There are ten times as many applications than there are allocated spaces and some vulnerable people are rejected with the explanation that there is not enough room on the quota for everyone.

Even when the application is successful, it takes 4-5 years before the person arrives. In the meantime, funds are being sent to help with food and education. For many new families, those funds put a great strain on their budget, especially for those single mothers who are on Newstart.

Murray Valley Sanctuary Refugee group has sponsored over 150 people since our first family arrived in 2006. Almost all are from the Congo, and have been able to gain work, attend university or TAFE. They receive 510 hours of English lessons from TAFE, depending on their existing proficiency and can also gain access to courses to enable them to get work, such as child or aged care, disability services, nursing, social work, or cleaning.

Several have taken jobs as teachers' aides in the schools, helping the newly arrived children as they adjust and learn English. Others have obtained work as berry pickers, cleaners and in the abattoirs and the logistic centre. For most of them these are short-term jobs, not careers. Often past experience and skills are not recognised or are not relevant in this setting. This will change over the next 5-10 years as the new settlers become established.

The African community in Australia is relatively new. The gradual breaking down of the White Australia Policy has meant that, unlike some of our previous groups, there are not many countrymen who have preceded them and not many successful businesses that can offer work for 'their own.'

As with previous waves of new migrants and refugees, the people from the continent of Africa (South Sudanese, Somalians, Ethiopians, Burundians and Congolese) are vulnerable to being scapegoated for political purposes.

However, with time there will be adjustment on both sides and the goal of Sanctuary is for new arrivals to become part of our community, contributing to our wellbeing and economy as we do for them.

Outstanding people stand out anywhere. Several have received awards or been promoted to positions of management. One girl has been a UNICEF ambassador for the past 12 months and one young man was chosen to be on the Multicultural Youth Council for the Department of Premier and Cabinet in Victoria. Both had been here less than 12 months at that time. The singers, the dancers, the soccer players and the dressmakers, cooks and gardeners all add to our culture and knowledge.

MEMORIAL UIVER DC2

The memorial Uiver DC-2 aircraft was purchased in 1979 for \$3,500 by the Rotary Club of Albury West from Davidson Aero Engineering, which had formerly traded as Marshall Airways, and was restored during the 75th anniversary of Rotary International with support from the community.

The aircraft arrived in Albury on 31 August 1979. Before WWII, the plane had carried passengers for Australian National Airways. On 17 February 1980 the memorial Uiver was placed in a prominent position on three supporting poles at the Albury Airport.

On 2 March 1980 the Governor General of Australia Sir Zelman Cowen, dedicated the memorial Uiver, with the Mayor of Albury, Alderman John Roach, representing the people of Albury.

On 20 August 2002, the aircraft was removed from its elevated stand for restoration work which did not eventuate. In March 2010, the Uiver Memorial Wall and Uiver surroundings (gardens) were demolished and poles removed to make way for airport extensions.

On 12 May 2016 the fuselage of the memorial aircraft was moved from the apron of the Albury Airport to the SmartAir hangar for restoration. Recent celebrations marked the 85th anniversary of the landing of the original Uiver at Albury Racecourse, 24 October 1934.



The memorial Uiver arriving in Albury
Border Morning Mail, 1 September, 1979

Answers to the question ‘why commemorate the centenary of the beginnings of Hume Dam’ might best be sought in the stories told of the dam. Storytelling about Hume Dam falls conventionally within three frames: stories of a political achievement, an engineering achievement, and an environmental challenge. They are not exclusive frames: they bleed not only into each other, but also, I suggest, into a fourth more particular but overarching place story frame based on the local impact of the dam. All these stories have contemporary relevance in 2019.

1 Political achievement, political challenge

When Sir Ronald Crawford Munro Ferguson, the Governor-General, turned the first sod on 28 November 1919, he made much of the political achievement of the dam. Three states and the Commonwealth had come together to regulate the flow of the Murray River and foster closer settlement. That was a nation-building exercise. Some claimed it as a first fruit of the new federation. In the aftermath of the First World War, it demonstrated to the world that the enterprising people of Australia deserved to hold this land.



Governor-General Sir Ronald Munro-Ferguson turns the first sod to start construction,

This was a wealth building project. Irrigation had already begun by the Chaffey brothers experiment in western Victoria, but inter-government agreement was required for more extensive use of the river waters. Under Section 100 of the Constitution the states retained the responsibility for conserving water. A conference at Corowa, organised by graziers anxious to improve the water supply to their pastures, urged the states and the Commonwealth to act together within a spirit of cooperative federalism. Subsequent investigations led to a conference of engineers in 1913 which showed a way to proceed. Each of the three states and the Commonwealth accepted and ratified a River Murray Waters Act based on their advice in 1914.

The states remain sovereign and as a result the spirit of cooperative federalism has been tested, many times, especially in drought. The political achievement of 1919 has over the last hundred years become an on-going political challenge. That challenge seemed to be addressed most recently with the Water Act of 2007 and the subsequent Murray Darling Basin Plan. Any commemoration in 2019 of the construction of the dam which was to inaugurate large-scale

irrigation has to be done within the context of constant and loud disagreements about the ways in which that plan balances social, economic and environmental needs.

2 Engineering achievement, engineering challenge

In 1936 Lord Gowrie, the Governor-General, declared the dam opened. He hailed Hume Dam as an engineering achievement. He praised those who sited the dam, designed it and built it. That sense of engineering achievement was, and still is, widely heralded. Engineers have hailed Hume Dam as one of the great engineering works in Australia. The dam was cleverly sited, huge in scale, and built without sophisticated tools.

The story of engineering achievement and challenge also has a local edge. There are over 770 photographs in the Albury Library Museum which show how local residents wondered at the construction process. When the local *Border Morning Mail* produced supplements retelling the story of the dam, it almost always moved beyond triumphal versions of the engineering story to draw attention to the dam



Work on the dam spillway, October 1924

workers. It depicted their work and living conditions in the construction site villages both sides of the border. Given the nature of our times, it might be expected that any commemoration in 2019 might extend such interest in the workers, to also include those who supported them or depended on them – their wives and children.

Further it seems appropriate to draw attention to the way Hume Dam became a giant ‘work for the dole’ type scheme during the Great Depression. In 1928 the *Albury Banner* complained of large numbers of unemployed men descending on town trying to get work at the dam. In 1931 work was rationed to one week in three, and in 1935 one week in four. Albury’s CWA tried to meet the pressing needs of poor families at the dam.

3 Environmental challenges and achievement

There were quite early complaints about the environmental impacts of the dam: decline in the number of native fish, tainted water and river bank erosion. It was not until the sister dam at Dartmouth was built during the 1970s that much critical attention was given to the environmental impact of the two dams. By then conservation groups were voicing concern about the effects of a new dam on the ecology of the river. Agricultural economists were asking whether a dry country like Australia should be encouraging irrigation.

Residents of Albury Wodonga became aware of increasing national concerns about water quality when measures were taken to monitor the impact of the National Growth Centre on the Murray River. The Peter Till Laboratory at Thurgoona, just behind the present-day Woolworths complex, became a national centre in freshwater research. Those who worked there were amongst the scientists who in the 1990s pushed the nation to make better sense of how the river system works.

In 2019 we are almost on a daily basis told of the tension between those who champion greater environmental flows and irrigators. Politicians try to balance conflicting needs. Many people would argue that present day knowledge of climate change demands that the nation accepts greater responsibility for adverse changes to the environment. Hume Dam has a central role in controlling the flows from the headwaters to be used downstream.



Peter Till Laboratory, Thurgoona

4 Living with Hume Dam, 1919-2019

These three story lines are national in scope, but plainly have local repercussions. If we more consistently narrow the scale to the local, other storylines emerge.

The NSW Heritage Listing of Hume Dam admits local significance on three measures: the dam’s ‘contribution to the community’s identity’; the dam as a ‘source of employment’; and the dam’s pondage as ‘a recreational resource’.

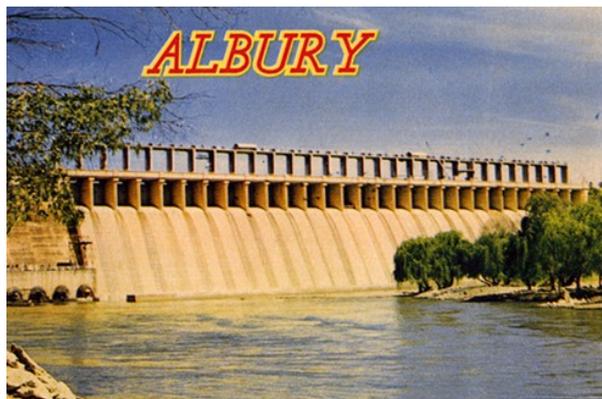
Community identity

Hume Dam literally put Albury on the map of the Murray River in 1919 as the gauge point at which flows were measured to proportion state shares of the water.

Metaphorically it put Albury on the map in the years immediately before the war. Albury was the immediate community custodian of a modern industrial icon in rural Australia, a symbol of rural regeneration. The dam was as grand architecturally as Sydney’s Harbour Bridge. Its pondage was seven times the size of Sydney’s harbour. Albury seized on images of the dam to brand itself as progressive. This was a modern, up-to-date community boasting new modern styled art deco buildings, huge wool stores as well as the biggest dam in the Southern Hemisphere. The idea of Albury was magnified not only with its association with Hume Dam but even more dramatically as the destination of the nation’s other proud engineering wonder, the Spirit of Progress. Progressive Albury was proud of the way it exemplified the spirit of the times.

In the years immediately after the war Hume Dam took on a wider place-making role with the establishment of the Bonegilla Reception Centre. Pictures of newly arrived migrants bathing near the wall or in the lake were circulated overseas to attract displaced persons to Australia. They were used within Australia to show the electorate that the nation was taking special care of the new arrivals. Here at Bonegilla, newcomers were being baptised into Australia. The migrants, too, took and hoarded their own pictures of their arrival place. Many of the young remembered their first encounters with Australia as a place of wet cossies and bare feet.

Hume Dam established community identity even more fundamentally. It was built where Hume and Hovell crossed the Murray in 1824. That crossing was to speed white settlement of inland Victoria. The very notion of white settlement points to the deep history of the place. Archaeologists have found over a hundred sites around Lake Hume attesting to Indigenous peoples' use of the area. The local indigenous community has helped the wider population to understand something of the cultural and spiritual connections river people have with their river. They insist that it was not only Bowna and Tallangatta that were inundated by dam storage waters but also signs of the much earlier and more extensive Aboriginal occupation and use of the area. Hume Dam is a teaching place. In 2019 many of the 40 indigenous communities in the Murray Darling Basin are insisting on having a central role in managing the basin.



Employment

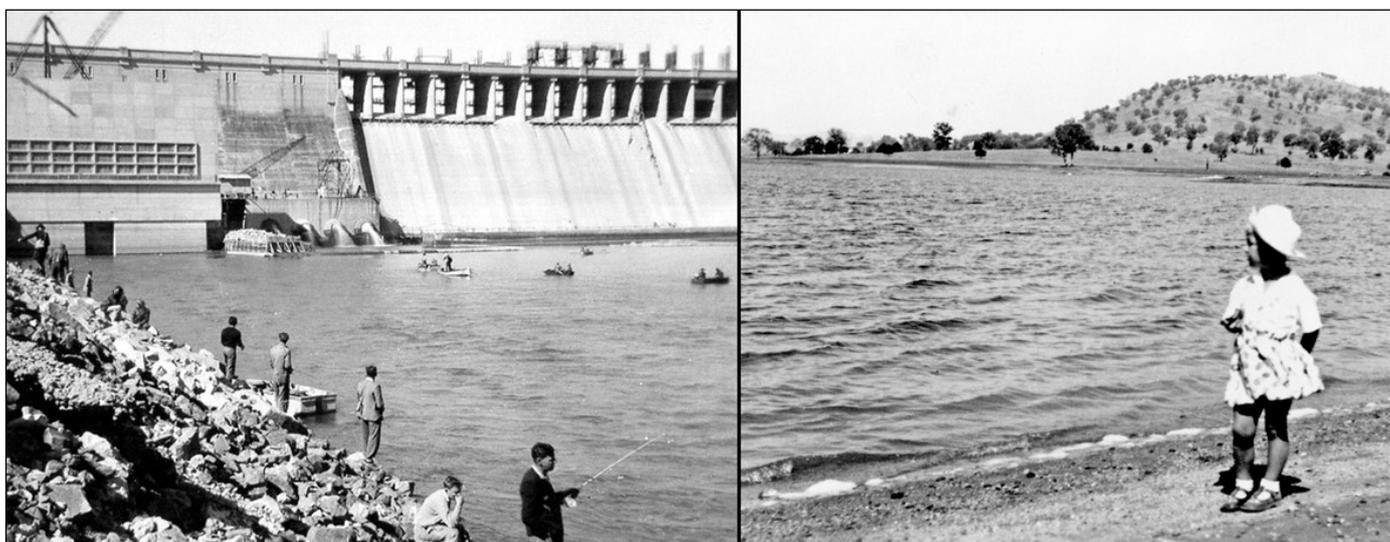
Albury, Wodonga and Lavington prospered supplying not only the workforce for the dam, but also the town service needs of that workforce. Work opportunities spread to road and rail construction to help with the building of the dam and the re-direction of the Hume Highway into Albury via Wagga Road and Mate Street.

Recreation

In 1918, *Border Morning Mail* predicted that the Mitta Mitta would become 'a very picturesque lake.' It was 'certain to be a favourite place for holiday makers in years to come' (17 December, p4). The holiday makers were to be drawn from the towns, the countryside and from even further away. Recreational pursuits ranged from the gentle and passive to the aggressively active. In 2019, Albury & District Historical Society and Wodonga Historical Society posed the Facebook question "What did 'going to the weir' mean to you?" Responses revealed different perceptions of different age groups. The need for transport to get there meant that many people experienced the area within families. The old and the young tell of fishing and swimming together or simply near each other. Some remembered the trout farm and the motor races. Those who were coming-of-age explored the area excitedly, and sometimes perilously, away from parental oversight. This was where growing up took place. A jumble of private photographs show Hume Dam and its surrounds as an important memory place for many residents.

Individual memory places become public memory places when they take on a wider significance. I suggest that Hume Dam and its surrounds provided a point of social cohesion between the people of Albury and Wodonga. The residents of both towns/cities enjoyed it together. That means this place reinforces the message in the two councils' campaign of 'Two Cities One Community.'

A picture of the dam appears on the promotional pamphlet as the link between Dean Street and Junction Place. Hume Dam is part of the social cohesion that marks Albury Wodonga as a place. There are, I have argued, four main ways in which Albury Wodonga appears to be One Community. It has one workforce and therefore a common economy. It has one health service. It has one local media, sharing a common newspaper, radio and



PREPARING FOR THE CENTENARY OF HUME DAM

Bruce Pennay

television. It has been brought into close embrace with the internal freeway. Hume Dam provides another form of social glue. The place that plays together, stays together.

Commemoration achievements

In October, Albury LibraryMuseum opened an exhibition 'Turning the First Sod' at Lavington Library. At our November meeting the Society will welcome Graham Hind, a retired engineer who will talk about the place of the dam in regulating the river. At 11 am on 29 November, President Greg Ryan will give a talk on 'Constructing Hume Dam' at Lavington Library. The Society will join Charles Sturt University and Latrobe University in presenting a show-and-tell session involving ten speakers at the Commercial Club at 4.30pm, 28 November. It is a FREE event but requires pre-registration at engagealburywodonga@csu.edu.au

Commemoration failures

In spite of much effort, we were not able to achieve some of the things we wanted. The Governor-General declined the invitation of the two councils to attend. Victoria Heritage was not interested in adding Hume Dam to its State Heritage List. The so-called 'Open Museum' at the start of the walkway across the Dam (which is closed at the moment) was originally supposed to have pieces 'added over time.' It remains forlorn, sporting a piece of machinery and an Albury Council sign of 2001.



GOING TO THE WEIR

Bruce Pennay is asking members of the Society to go to their family photographic albums. He would be pleased to get scans of photographs that show how Hume Dam and Lake Hume have been used/are used as a recreation area. Contact Bruce bpennay@csu.edu.au



COMING UP

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences is a new exhibition that explores the aftermath of World War I and the impacts it had on Albury and surrounding regional communities.

The exhibition explores the stories of those returning home from the war and their families, and the industrial, commercial and agricultural developments that occurred as a result of the war. It also uncovers some lesser known stories including the post home-coming lives of Aboriginal service people. It includes interactive discovery activities for children to explore the exhibition with their families.

Albury LibraryMuseum, Monday 11 November – Sunday 26 January.

For more information visit murrayarts.org.au/consequences

EXPLORING TROVE – FREE WORKSHOP

Researcher? Teacher? School student? Family historian?

Using local examples, discover how to use the Trove website in research and learning enrichment. Trove has millions of online resources – researchers can find content from a huge range of Australian libraries, museums, archives and other collections.

When: Wednesday 4 December, 9:45 am – 11:15 am

Where: Lavington Library, Northpoint Tower, Griffith Road, Lavington

Bookings essential 02 6043 5645 lavingtonlibrary@alburycity.nsw.gov.au

Albury Newspapers on

 **Trove**
trove.nla.gov.au



Visit our website for photos of old Albury, history articles, past Bulletins and much more.

Go to:

<http://alburyhistory.org.au/>



Find us on
Facebook

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

FIFTY YEARS AGO, October 1969

Richard Lee

Mr Ken Barber, the Albury pool lessee/manager, had been in charge of the Albury swimming pool for the past five years and was finalising arrangements for the opening of the pool for the season.

Jindera Museum was celebrating its first birthday, while the Ovens & Murray grand final was contested by Wodonga and Wangaratta, Wodonga the winners.

Woodstock Presbyterian Girls' School (Glenroy) opened a new boarding house called 'Norwood.'

The State Government offices (QEII Square) won the Blacket Award, an architectural award from the NSW Royal Australian Institute of Architects, to architect Mr E H Farmer of Sydney.

The Tourist Information building in Wodonga Place opened on October 16 .

'Valetta,' the old home of Dr Woods, to be demolished for the Albury Entertainment Convention Centre in Swift Street. In spite of regular protest letters to the editor, ACC had pretty much shut the gate on that debate.

Our Historical Society guest speakers were Mr & Mrs Hazelwood with a talk including illustrations on the Ord River Scheme in Western Australia.

Construction of the Travelodge (now Atura Hotel in Dean Streets) was approved by Albury Council. It would have 144 units and was valued at \$2 million. The *Border Morning Mail* had a photo of a model of the structure.

Rotary Clubs have come on board in 2019 as corporate sponsors of our Society. In October 1969, the meeting of the Rotary Club of Albury welcomed three new members, Noel Stevens (legal), Bill Cromarty (broadcasting TV) and John Keane (architect) – this took membership to 96. Mieko Mori was their Japanese exchange student and she received opal earrings from the Club for her birthday.

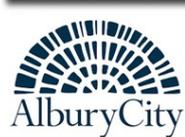


Margaret Court has loaned her portrait painting by William Dargie to the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra. The painting is currently on display at the Albury LibraryMuseum.

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.



Thanks to Commercial Club for many years of support.



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.

Patrons: Patricia Gould, Greg Aplin

Honorary Life Members:

Howard Jones, Helen Livsey,

June Shanahan, Jan Hunter.

President: Greg Ryan

Vice-President: Joe Wooding

Secretary: Helen Livsey

02 6021 3671

Treasurer: Simon Burgess

Minute Secretary: Jill Wooding

Publicity Officer: Jill Wooding

Public Officer: Helen Livsey

Committee: Marion Taylor, Howard Jones,

Chris de Vreeze, Bruce Pennay, Ray Gear

Bulletin Editor: Greg Ryan

gmjryan@bigpond.com

Publications & Stock Officer: Ray Gear

Bulletin dispatch: Richard Lee

Meeting Greeter: Jill Wooding

Web Editor: 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 LibraryMuseum.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$30 Family: \$35

Corporate: \$100

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

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