

# Albury & District Historical Society Inc



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Cathy McGowan addresses a large audience at our last General Meeting held at the Commercial Club

## Next Meeting

Due to concerns re the COVID-19 pandemic, our committee has decided that until further notice, all our meetings have been cancelled.

Good news – our Bulletin will still be published monthly.

**More information on Page 8.**



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## REPORT ON MARCH MEETING (11.03.2020)

Our guest speaker, former Federal Member of Parliament for Indi, Cathy McGowan, outlined her own personal journey and challenged us to consider what can be done to recognise the displaced indigenous communities of north-east Victoria. In order to do this, we must look at the history of white settlement and how it impacted on the region's first inhabitants.

Greg Ryan read out a message from Wodonga Historical Society expressing their sympathy on the passing of Joe Wooding.

A video was screened, part of a lecture given to an historical group in Miami, Florida in which the connection between Albury and Miami via William Barnwell Brickell was highlighted. This was followed by the presentation of a plaque recognising the research of Denise McMahon and Christine Wild that first piqued the interest of Miami historian, Cesar Becerra. The plaque was accepted by Christine (see page 5).

The research project of ANU PhD student, Emily Gallagher, was briefly described. Emily is researching children's pages in early Australian newspapers and is particularly interested in the *Albury Banner* and *Wodonga Express* children's page, with local youngsters writing to 'Uncle Jeff.' Emily has requested help from any locals who might be able to shed light on the identity of 'Uncle Jeff' (see page 3).

New Society members, Claire & Tom Doolan were welcomed along with Ann McAulay, who has been a member for some time but this was just the second meeting that she has attended. Greg also notified members that Dennis Hickey has joined the committee, filling the casual vacancy created with the passing of Joe Wooding.

The meeting concluded with a quick look at some photos from the Dallinger collection.

Cathy McGowan was born in Albury. In 2001 she was a recipient of the Centenary Medal and in 2004 she was made an Officer of the Order of Australia “for service to the community through raising awareness of and stimulating debate about issues affecting women in regional, rural and remote areas.”

Elected as an independent MP for the seat of Indi at the 2013 federal election, and again in 2016, Cathy retired from Federal Parliament in 2019.

**Summary:** Truth telling – understanding early settlement history of North-East Victoria and opportunities to document the stories, sites, personalities and learnings.

### Background

Growing up in NE Victoria I have had superficial contact with early settlement and their connection with local traditional owners. Following the gold rushes, my family, Terrills, were settlers in the Mitta Valley. Growing up in the Indigo Valley our farm bordered the Mt Pilot National Park and we were regular visitors to the rock art. As a young teacher I lived at Bontharambo Station just outside Wangaratta, where Mary Docker lived. H J Samuel used her diary in writing his children’s book *A Saddle at Bontharambo* sharing stories of early settlement around the Ovens and King Valleys, including interaction with local people.

When Kevin Rudd made the public apology, the MP for Indi was absent. This decision generated much controversy. When I was elected MP for Indi, in an attempt to acknowledge and ‘make wrong’ this slight, I made a commitment to pay particular attention to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and actively represent them in Parliament.



Postcard of Lake Moodemere with a reclining Neddy Wheeler

The lake, a billabong of 21 ha south of Wahgunyah, is popular for fishing, swimming, bird watching and picnicking.

The Traditional Owners called it Bulegeaba (Black Swan), a corroboree and camping ground for ceremonies and rituals. From around 1849 onward, Lake Moodemere became an ‘unofficial’ refuge for the remaining Waveroo, Wiradjuri and Pangerang tribespeople. In 1851 their population numbered about 200 – a decade later it was 30. Places like Lake Moodemere offered a less restrictive alternative to the Missions that were closely monitored by the Aboriginal Protection Board.

Reference: ‘Duplicity and Cunning at Lake Moodemere’

<https://dhudhuroaandwaywurruancestors.wordpress.com/2019/03/30/duplicity-and-cunning-at-lake-moodemere-the-kitty-brangy-photographs-that-did-not-exist/>

One of the consequences of this representation was my appointment in 2018 to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (November 2018).

Among many communities, the committee visited Wodonga (Indi) and Shepparton (Murray) in 2018. The obvious difference between these two neighbouring Victorian communities was the presence and active involvement of Traditional Owners. It was very strong in Shepparton, almost non-existent in Wodonga. While there are numbers of aboriginal people who live in Indi, there are only a very small number of traditional owners. I was keen to better understand the difference between these two communities and its impact on our nation. I wanted to better understand the history of white settlement.

There is evidence that aboriginal people lived in and travelled through the valleys and hills of NE Victoria. However, it is very hard to find information about their lives, the period of white settlement and their current situation.

Historical societies, libraries and local Government organisations have an extensive collection of diaries, books, artefacts and knowledge covering the period of white settlement.

Some Historical Societies in NE Victoria have material from early settlers, and there is extensive local knowledge: Dr Bruce Pennay’s “Indigo Shire Heritage Study – thematic history” provides an excellent summary of early settlement, Wahgunyah Historical Society has material on the Lake Moodemere Reserve, Jacqui Durrant has written extensively on aboriginals around Beechworth and the Alps.

In NE Victoria (and my apologies as I am not as familiar with southern NSW) we know many of the ‘settlement’ families are still in the community. We know there are only a

very small number of Traditional Owners, and they mostly live outside the region.

### The Opportunity

Recommendation 3 in the final report of the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional recognition relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples:

**The committee recommends that the Australian Government support the process of truth telling. This could include the involvement of local organisations and communities, libraries, historical societies and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Associations. Some national coordination may be required, not to determine outcomes but to provide incentive and vision. These projects could include both Aboriginal and TSI people and descendants of local settlers. This could be done prior to or after the establishment of local voice bodies.**

The Government has committed to a public process of consultation and a decision by next year. Truth-telling will be a key element of this process.

How would we, as a community of interested people, and with some expertise, engage with this Government lead process?

When talking with aboriginal people about this idea, their clear advice to me, was to begin with my history; that is to collect and understand white settlement history, before I dive into aboriginal history. Their suggestion was that shared history would then be a second stage. But first we had to gather our stories together.

### Options for action

Form a task group to design a process for sourcing and documenting what is known, where the information is held, details of the knowledge holders.

Design a process for sharing that information:

- A PhD study
- A funded research project?

If you are interested in helping with this project, please contact Cathy at [cathy@cathymcgowan.com](mailto:cathy@cathymcgowan.com)

### ALBURY'S MYSTERIOUS 'UNCLE JEFF'

Emily Gallagher

Emily Gallagher is a PhD student at the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra.

**CHILDREN'S PAGE**  
**For Young Australians Who Read**  
**"The Banner."**

(Edited by Uncle Jeff.)

The thousands of boys and girls who read the "Banner" throughout Riverina and other parts of this sunny country will be delighted to observe that the editor has set apart a page for us all to ourselves. And, if I may be allowed to say it, I think it is only right that we should have such a corner of our own in the paper. You know, the "grown-ups" have many pages—the ladies' page, farmers' pages, political pages, novelists' pages, and all those others which go to make up the "forty-eight." Of course, the children have always been remembered as far as the weekly story is concerned; but now, as I have said, we are going to have a great deal more. I want our young readers to help me to make their page one of the undoubted features of the enlarged paper. I want them to take an active interest in the page, to write letters, ask questions (which will all be answered), take part in competitions—and assist generally in making this page the literary playground of the young Australians of Riverina.

In October 1906 the *Albury Banner* and *Wodonga Express* joined a growing number of Australian newspapers publishing a weekly correspondent children's page. Children's corners, columns and pages had been regular features of Australian newspapers in various forms throughout the nineteenth century. But until the mid-1890s, and even for some time afterwards, they were mostly comprised of adult-authored materials: serial stories, poems, moral or instructive writings, features on hobbies and sport, and a corner for jokes and riddles. At the turn of the century a number of children's pages underwent a transformation from curated collections of adult contributions written for children to correspondence clubs that published the writings of children.

It was within this context that the *Banner's* children's page (later children's circle) was established under the editorship of a mysterious 'Uncle Jeff.' We know very little about the man behind this pen-name, except perhaps that he was born in Goulburn and a well-known Albury personality. Notorious for his witty replies and cheeky humour, it is hard to know whether stories of 'Uncle Jeff's' fat but fashionable wife 'Aunt Mary' and their nineteen children had even a kernel of truth to them.

For the thirty-five years 'Uncle Jeff' edited the *Banner's* children's page, he remained fiercely protective of his identity. Children, though, can be formidable detectives, especially in a small town. Several 'nieces' and 'nephews' discovered the mysterious editor's 'real' identity, recognising him in Albury streets or at local shows.

'Uncle Jeff' introduces the *Banner's* first Children's Page in October 1906

"One day when I was in Albury," wrote Walla Walla niece Nancy Andrews in 1919, "I saw you and wondered where your nineteen children were." "I wasn't at the Walbundrie show," admitted Gertrude Zweck the following year, "but some of my school mates saw you there." Several contemporary readers wondered whether 'Uncle Jeff' might have been the pen-name for two or more editors, but 'Uncle Jeff' assured any doubtful correspondents that he was in fact 'the same Uncle Jeff' their parents wrote to. As yet, there has been no evidence to the contrary.

Correspondent children's pages often developed their own club cultures. The *Banner's* children's page was no exception. After surviving a few rocky patches in its early years, the page became an unusually open forum for discussion and debate. 'Uncle Jeff' encouraged his nieces and nephews to pursue patriotic and civic-minded activities, and often celebrated the virtues of country childhood. Like many other children's page editors of the day, he also helped his young correspondents find pen-pals. Over the years, membership only continued to expand, at one point enjoying a one-and-a-half page spread. It was, as 'Uncle Jeff' had hoped in 1907, the 'literary playground' of 'Young Australians of the Riverina.'

Alongside other prominent children's pages like the *Sydney Mail's* Cinderella Page and *Southern Cross's* St Vincent's Juvenile Club, the *Banner's* children's page has caught my interest over the last few years. Not only is it a striking example of children's creativity and literacy in Australia at the turn of the century, but also a window onto children's social and political life. As well as discussing their own everyday lives, 'Uncle Jeff's' nieces and nephews debated foreign policy, women's franchise, domestic labour and geopolitics. I am hoping that this important but neglected historical source can offer insight into the imaginations, peer cultures and literary traditions of Australian children in the first half of the twentieth century. If you have any information about the *Banner's* children's page or its mysterious editor 'Uncle Jeff', please do get in contact with me at [emily.gallagher@anu.edu.au](mailto:emily.gallagher@anu.edu.au)



Member's Badge

### TRAWLING TROVE – Ethel Turner, Zora Cross and Uncle Jeff

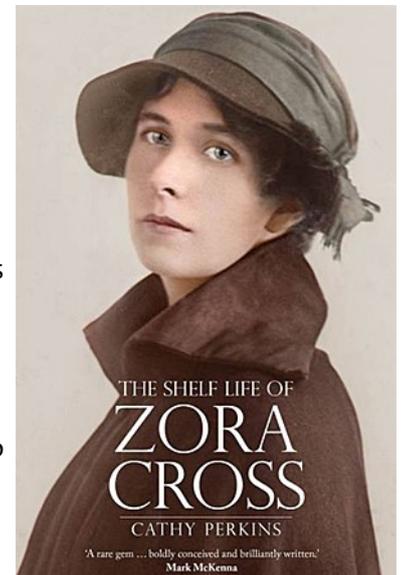
Cathy Perkins' book *The Shelf Life of Zora Cross* begins with explanation of how Zora started as a writer. As a nine-year old living near Gympie in rural Queensland, Zora began writing letters in 1900 to 'Dame Durden' (Ethel Turner, author of *Seven Little Australians*, 1894) at the *Town and Country Journal*. She was still writing, not just letters, but also poems and stories nearly ten years later. Zora remained in contact with Ethel Turner and asked her (unsuccessfully)

to spruik the controversial book of poems Zora published as *Love and Life* in 1917. By then she was a well-established journalist/author publishing in *Lone Hand* and the *Bulletin*.

Picking up on the idea of recruiting children's contributions, the *Albury Banner*, which already had a ladies' page and a farmers' page, decided to include not just a children's story but a children's page with contributions from the young in the homes it reached. 'Uncle Jeff,' the editor, explained the rules for writing on October 8, 1906.

Uncle Jeff addressed the contributors as 'Nieces and Nephews'. They referred to each other as 'Cousins.' Country children wrote about the pets, their farm, local shows and, during the war, the adventures and misadventures of their brothers and fathers. So far there are 13,310 hits on Trove for the entry 'Uncle Jeff.'

The page continued until the *Albury Banner* closed in 1950. The last entry on Trove is on September 12, 1941 (and included a photograph of one of the most consistent contributors, Jessica Sutherland, a 'Thurgoona Niece' who wrote as 'Leafless Lily.'



#### THURGOONA NIECE



JESSIE SUTHERLAND ('Leafless Lily'), of Thurgoona, who is one of the most consistent writers to the Page.

## RECOGNITION FOR AMERICAN FEVER, AUSTRALIAN GOLD

At our March meeting, a plaque was presented to local researcher Christine Wild. Christine and Denise McMahon published *American Fever, Australian Gold: American and Canadian Involvement in Australia's Gold Rush* [2008], the story of over 170 men from North America seeking their fortune in our district in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Of specific interest is the story of William Barnwell Brickell and Adam Casner Kidd and the research conducted by Cesar Becerra last September (see Bulletin 605, October 2019). In early January 2020, Cesar presented the results of his research to the 'Miami Pioneers and Natives of Dade' [Dade is a Miami County] where he recognised the work of Christine and Denise.

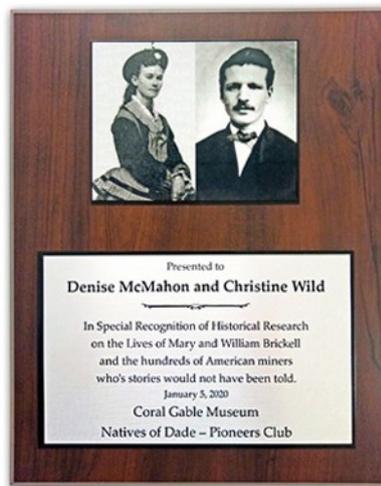
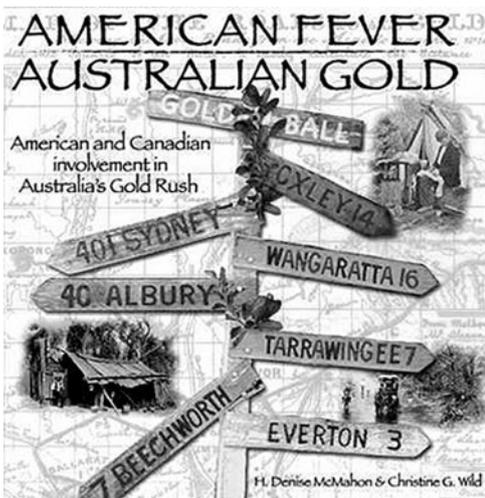
Kidd and Brickell were of particular interest to Denise as her great-grandfather, Hiram Crawford, had worked for them in Albury in 1854. Crawford went on to develop a stage coach line known as Crawford & Co, with his horses and coaches stabled at the Exchange Hotel of Brickell and Kidd.

The plaque was organised by Cesar with the support of Don Slesnick, Australia's Honorary Consul in Miami. After shipment from Miami to Albury, we were able to present the plaque to Christine. Cesar wrote "This is a small token of appreciation from myself and Don Slesnick who has been very helpful in promoting the historical connections between USA and Australia [and] honours their tireless work on behalf of not only the Brickells but hundreds of Americans who plied the gold fields of Australia in the 1850s and beyond."

In responding, Christine commented "These folks had not been recorded in the history books of northeast Victoria, so we set out to rectify this omission ... it was certainly a pleasure to have met Cesar and to share in his excitement as he walked in the footprints of William Brickell in Australia."

A recording of Cesar's address to the 'Miami Pioneers and Natives of Dade' can be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQFpIISUD7k>



## OLD HUME HIGHWAY

The fascinating history of the Hume Highway is only a few clicks away with a new website launched by Transport NSW.

The interactive online portal was launched to encourage travellers to explore off the beaten track along the highway.

The website unearths the history of Australia's most significant road, the Hume Highway, including many historic images.

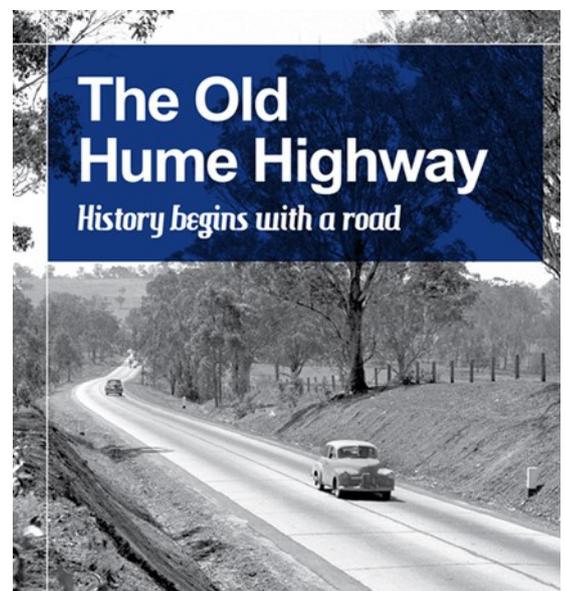
The website was inspired by the book *The Old Hume Highway – History Begins with a Road*. The book charts the colonial history, fascinating yarns, colourful characters and important events that make the highway unique.

The website may be accessed with this link:

<https://www.rms.nsw.gov.au/about/environment/protecting-heritage/old-hume-highway/old-hume-hwy-home.html>

For further reading:

<https://www.goulburnpost.com.au/story/6628402/discover-the-stories-characters-and-history-of-the-hume-highway/>



## SUGGESTIONS FROM HISTORY COUNCIL OF VICTORIA!

Are you looking for historically-focussed things to do while distancing yourself from social gatherings, or in quarantine? Here some suggestions!

### Contribute to *A Journal of the Plague Year: An archive of COVID-19*

The Melbourne History Workshop invites you to document how COVID19 has affected your life. Share your story in text, images, video, tweets, texts, Facebook posts, Instagram or Snapchat memes. Include screenshots of the news and emails—anything that speaks to paradoxes of the moment. Go to: <https://covid19.omeka.net/mhw>  
This global project, endorsed by the HCV, is a way of helping our community to understand the extraordinary as well as the ordinary aspects of this pandemic.

### Join a community that's organising and improving online historical resources

Help correct the scanned text of historic newspapers and create lists etc on Trove, the National Library of Australia's repository of full-text digital resources and platform for aggregated information and metadata.

### Listen to podcasts about history

There are now many history-focussed audio programs that you can hear via the internet (using a computer or other device), or via a smart phone.

There's a great list of podcasts at: <https://player.fm/podcasts/australian-history>. Their programs cover the history of many parts of the world, not only the history of Australia.

### Visit an online exhibition

Many of the world's cultural institutions have closed to the public as a preventative measure, to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading among visitors, staff and volunteers. Their staff are, however, still at work! Many are actively putting more of their information and resources online. Visit the websites of your favourite institutions and see what they are offering. Search for 'online exhibitions' or 'virtual exhibitions.' Many organisations are also uploading new activities designed for children.

Don't miss: <https://artsandculture.google.com/explore>

### Explore the resources of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies

Start at: <https://www.history.org.au/enews/>

There you can access past eBulletins and Newsletters, packed with updates from historical societies across the country. The FAHS website also holds other resources of relevance to historians and people interested in history.

### Catch up on your reading of books by historians

Although most public lending libraries are currently closed, many bookshops (including second-hand booksellers) will take orders online or by telephone, and will deliver by post.

Which history texts have you enjoyed lately? [Visit our Facebook page](#) to share your recommendations for the benefit of all.

Here are two examples: [Women in Gippsland's History](#) and [Women of Walhalla](#) (both are Facebook projects and part of Women's History Month, March 2020).

### Reflect - are we learning from the history of pandemics?

In 2019, one of the *Making Public Histories* seminars focussed on 'Death, disease and pandemics'. Those who attended emerged much better informed about Australia's past responses: to the Spanish Flu of 1919, the terror of polio, and the AIDS crisis.

Australian historians are now sharing more widely their perspectives on historical pandemics. Here are some recent articles that should encourage readers to reflect on the lessons of history:

Geoffrey Blainey, '[Compacency lulled us into delusion](#)', *The Weekend Australian*, 21-22 March 2020.

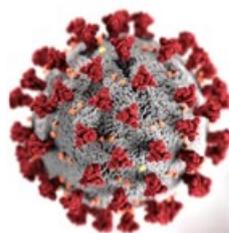
Frank Bongiorno, '[How Australia's response to the Spanish flu of 1919 sounds warnings on dealing with coronavirus](#)', *The Conversation*, 22 March 2020.

Debbie Cuthbertson, '[What we can learn from Victoria's Spanish flu outbreak of 1919](#)', *The Age*, 22 March 2020.

This article includes an interview with Mary Sheehan, professional historian and one of the speakers at our 2019 seminar.

### Take a moment to endorse the importance of history!

Read and endorse the [Value of History statement](#) that was published last year by the four History Councils in Australia.



**COVID-19**  
HISTORY-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES  
WHILE DISTANCING FROM  
SOCIAL GATHERINGS

## HISTORIC SITE FOR SALE

Catherine O'Neill, the owner of St Hilaire, announced in November that the homestead and its immediate surrounds are for sale. She is asking \$875 000 for the property.

St Hilaire was developed as a vineyard by Francois Gaston Leonce Frere. He built the homestead in about 1876. He was a native of Charente, the great French wine district.



In 1874 he was persuaded by James Fallon to come to Albury to establish champagne production. Some excellent wine was said to have been produced and was the first sparkling wine ever made in Australia. However, owing to Albury's extreme summer heat which caused the bottles to explode, the experiment was ultimately abandoned. In 1876, Frere's brother Gustave secured 80 acres of land, and together they laid the foundation of the St Hilaire vineyard. Senators on a search party investigating the best site for a Federal Capital visited the vineyard and enjoyed the wine tastings they were offered.

Local vines, including those at St Hilaire, were wiped out by Phylloxera in the years following its discovery in an Albury vineyard in 1908.

## ONCE YOU SAW IT. NOW YOU DON'T.

Since 1998 the Society has been pressing Council to install a marker or public art indicating why the former Indian Cemetery Reserve in Jelbart Park is on the Council's Heritage Register.

In February 2017 A&DHS renewed its efforts and lobbied for the installation of public art to bear witness to Albury's migrant heritage and to act as a sign of respect for the recently arrived from the sub-continent.

Three years later there is still no such installation. However the barbecue, which had been most inappropriately sited in the cremation area, has been removed.

Cremations for members of the Indian community were conducted in the Albury Common before representatives of the Indian community requested a dedicated site. The *Albury Banner* reported on September 29, 1905: "Esse Singh and Chere Singh, two Hindoo residents of the Albury district, have written to the Borough Council, on behalf of their friends, asking the Council to grant them an acre of land on the common, or any lesser area, embracing the site of the recent cremation, for the purpose of cremating their dead. The aldermen generally were in sympathy with the request, but the Council Clerk was asked to furnish a report as to the best location for the site."

Subsequently, the area that is now on the north-west corner of Jelbart Park became the preferred site for cremations.



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

Go to:

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



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**Facebook**

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## CANCELLATION OF A&DHS MEETINGS DUE TO CORONAVIRUS

On Tuesday November 8, 1960 at 8pm, a meeting was held in Albury Town Hall for the purpose of forming an Historical Society for Albury and District. So in November this year it will be 60 years since that meeting. The first general meeting of A&DHS was in February 1961. As far as I know, apart from not meeting in January, the Society has not missed a monthly meeting (though in a couple of months there was no Bulletin).

Our committee had made the decision to cancel general meetings before the health situation escalated and the Government directive was issued re closure of venues – so cancellation will be no surprise to members.

We will miss our meetings but the good news is that we will continue to publish our Bulletin monthly, though perhaps in a smaller format.

When meetings can reconvene is anybody's guess, but in the meantime, stay safe and healthy.

Greg Ryan, President

## QUEEN ELIZABETH II SQUARE

The good citizens selected by Albury City Council to attend the special silver service lunch with the Queen and her husband in 1988 were surprised to hear that Council had decided to name the city's central park "Queen Elizabeth II Square."

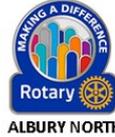
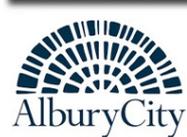
They were not surprised to know that, in accordance with Royal-visit protocols, the meal would call on local produce.

However, locals were not pleased to find that the protocol team overseeing the royal visit to Albury had supplied 'local' wines, all drawn from Hunter Valley in New South Wales. No wines from the district vineyards were served, as they would have come from Victoria.

## A&DHS Corporate Sponsors

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Please click on the logo to visit their respective websites.



Thanks to Commercial Club for many years of support.



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**Patrons:** Patricia Gould, Greg Aplin

**Honorary Life Members:**

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

**President:** Greg Ryan

**Vice-President:** Howard Jones (acting)

**Secretary:** Helen Livsey

02 6021 3671

**Treasurer:** Simon Burgess

**Minute Secretary:** Jill Wooding

**Publicity Officer:** Jill Wooding

**Public Officer:** Helen Livsey

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**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**

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