

# Hawksview Bridge

*Greg Ryan*

After years of lobbying and arguments against the cheaper option of a punt, the Hawksview Bridge was opened on April 26, 1895. Named 'Talgarno Bridge' at the official opening, it was located upstream from today's Bethanga Bridge, just below where Bowna Creek meets the Murray River at a site that was known as 'Gold Creek Ford.'

In his speech at the opening, Member for Albury John Wilkinson, MLA, commented on Albury Mayor David Watson's absence and "hinted at neglect of duty." Apparently not invited to the opening, the mayor later met Wilkinson in the street saying that he did not like the "impudence" of Wilkinson who then offered "to go to the drill hall, put on gloves, and settle the matter under Queensberry rules." The invitation was not accepted, but Watson remarked that "he (Wilkinson) was no \_\_\_ good, that he would knock his eyelids off, and punch his \_\_\_ head." Wilkinson filed charges for "insulting language," Watson receiving a £5 fine.



The bridge was built to a new design of Percy Allan, a young engineer in the NSW Public Works Department. It had two 90ft (about 28m) timber truss spans with two 30ft approach spans. The contract price was £1751, half borne by each of NSW and Victoria.

The road from the bridge met the Sydney Road at Bowna after running through the historic sheep and cattle station, 'Hawksview,' a property gifted by Elizabeth Mitchell to her son John Francis Huon Mitchell in 1859.

The importance of the crossing had been recognised by the colonial governments of NSW and Victoria and residents of the Upper Murray and Albury. But there was opposition from Wodonga Council, fearing that ready access to Albury from the Upper Murray would lose Wodonga important business.

There was no doubting the importance to Albury “the bridge will divert a great deal of the Upper Murray traffic to Albury, as the new route will considerably shorten the road distance of Talgarno, Bethanga, Walwa and Tintaldra from this town.” One of the chief advocates for the bridge was well known Albury townsman and blacksmith John McEachern. He conceded that “in promoting the construction of this bridge he had been promoting his own interests.”

With the Hume Dam beginning to fill in the 1920s, work on construction of the Bethanga Bridge commenced in 1927. The approaches to the Hawksview Bridge were submerged for the first time in 1929. In April 1931, tenders were called for purchase of the bridge. It was demolished in May 1932.