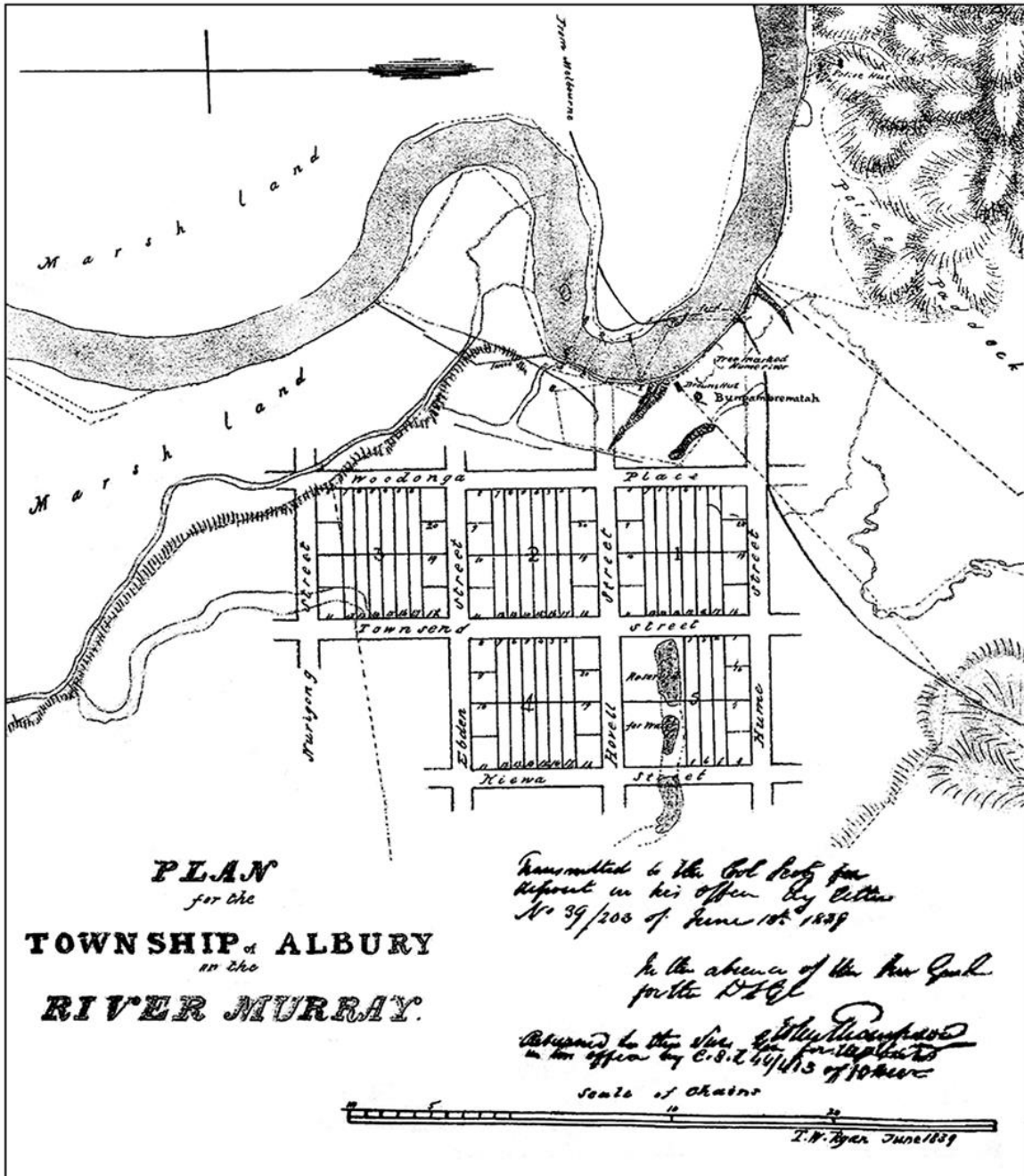# How Albury got its Name

Greg Ryan

The first European settler on the site of Albury was Robert Brown who, in 1838, built a slab hut on the northern bank of the Hume (Murray) River. The hut operated as a general store, very close to the best site to cross the river (at the western end of present Hume Street). Consequently, the site became known as 'The Crossing Place.'

In 1839, surveyor Thomas Townsend submitted his plan for a township. Two letters to the editor of the *Albury Banner* in 1924 give some insight into selection of a town name.

A copy of Thomas Townsend's original 1839 'Plan for the Township of Albury.'

J F Thomas, member of the Royal Australian Historical Society, wrote "A family of the name of 'Albury' emigrated from Kent and settled on the Murray. I knew one of the grandchildren (now 77 years of age), who says that her father and grandfather had told her that Albury on the Murray, was named after her grandfather (John Albury), who had a farm and vineyard there."

Albury historian, Dr Arthur Andrews, responded: "I have since been able, through Mr H Selkirk, late of the Lands Department, to make further enquiries on the subject. He writes that he searched in vain the records of the Lands Department for the name of Albury as a grantee or Crown tenant of any kind.

"He also examined the actual minute book of the Executive Council of the time. He found that the design for the town was submitted by the Surveyor General to the Governor and Council, January 26th, 1839. He describes the plan as a 'survey made by Assistant surveyor Townsend of the nucleus of a town at the Murray designated by the natives as *Bungambrewattah*.'

"On the margin of the plan a note in pencil thus: 'It must be confessed that it is not a euphonious [pleasant sounding] name.' On March 15 Townsend's plan for a town at Bungambrewattah was submitted to the Governor and Council under the signature of William Macpherson, clerk to the Council, in whose handwriting the name 'Bungambrewattah' is struck out and that of 'Aldbury' substituted.

"The 'd' was in the original, but crossed out. Finally, on April 13th, 1839, the plan and approval of the name 'Albury' was passed by the Council. There is nothing in the records to support John Albury's claim."

In England there is an Albury (or Aldbury) in each of Surrey, Oxfordshire and Hertfordshire. So perhaps Albury was named for one of these but if that is the case, it is not recorded.

Dr Bruce Pennay has an alternative suggestion for the origin of the name. He points out that in Old English *eald* means 'old' and *byrig*, or *burh* means 'stronghold' – so the word Al-bury means 'old fort'. Governor Gipps' map of 1838 proposed 'military posts' or towns between Sydney and Port Phillip including 'Murray' on the future site of Albury. These forts were to protect against aboriginal attack. Dr Pennay argues "that the name Albury is a reminder of dispossession rather than inks with merry England."

SKETCH OF PROPOSED MILITARY POSTS BETWEEN SYDNEY AND PORT PHILLIP