

ALBURY & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.
President's Report 2020/21

We had a late start to general meetings in 2020/21 due to restrictions caused by Covid-19. We were grateful to have missed the worst effects of the pandemic and in August we held our first meeting since March. Getting together again was very welcome even though some members were trapped south of the Border, unable to cross due to travel restrictions in place.

Society membership continues to grow – we now have in excess of 120 members, with twenty-three new members over the past year. Our website continues to be a key source of local history information – *Google Analytics* reveals that in the past twelve months the site has averaged 21 visitor sessions per day, each visitor viewing an average of 2.1 pages per visit.

At our monthly meetings we heard a broad range of topics from quality speakers:

- After our postponed AGM closed in August, Graham Docksey described changes that have been made to the Albury War Memorial.
- Gaye Pattison gave as a brief overview of the history of ABC radio in Albury and the ABC's role during the recent bushfires and the Covid pandemic.
- Ross Jackson spoke about an almost forgotten local siding in Albury, Kinloss. He then related the story of the funeral train for Tim Fischer.
- Chris McQuellin related the story of Albury man, John Hunter, shot down and then confined to military prison for the remainder of World War II.
- Doug Hunter outlined the history of the Light Horse Museum, the 8th /13th Victorian Mounted Rifles Regimental Collection.
- Geoff Romero told the story of his ggg and gg grandfathers, both Francisco Romero. The first was involved in the slave trade, the second was the builder of Albury's Smollett St bridge.
- Ashley Edwards outlined her career as an archaeologist in Cyprus, north-east Victoria and southern NSW. She then explained her role as a Senior Heritage Operations Officer with Heritage NSW.
- Bree Pickering illustrated exhibitions at MAMA and priorities in choosing exhibits and exhibitors. She also talked of a proposal for MAMA to be privatised.
- Russ Jacob gave us the story of the McPherson Robertson Air Race, the history of the Uiver Restoration Project's Douglas DC2 and the progress with restoration.

Secondary speakers at our meetings included Jason Kimball of Albury Botanic Gardens, Fr Peter McLeod Miller on the future of St Matthew's rectory, representatives of Inland Rail with the latest on that project, the working life of Harold Groch at Lemke's dairy, Luke Stein of ACC with details of the draft plans for QEII Square, the new owners of Kia Ora with plans for its future and the usual interesting items to display and describe in December's 'Show & Tell.' Richard Lee's '50 (or more) Years Ago' was always informative and entertaining.

Our twice postponed Albury Pioneer Cemetery Walk finally eventuated on Sunday April 18 – ten presenters talking about ten 'Distinguished, ordinary or forgotten' women interred in the cemetery. Almost eighty people joined us on a lovely day to hear ten well researched and presented tributes to the ten women highlighted.

By the coming July, the *Albury Banner & Wodonga Express* on the National Library's Trove website will go back as far as its first edition in 1860 and the *Border Morning Mail* will cover the years 1903-1920 and 1938-49. This marks the end of the Society's five-year-long project that cost \$132,000. Again, we thank Bruce Pennay, the prime mover in making fund applications. Funding support came from the NSW Regional Cultural Fund, the Public Record Office (Vic), the Royal Australian Historical Society, Inland Rail, the Commercial Club of Albury, Charles Sturt University and generous private donors.

This past year we have received generous support from corporate sponsors: the Commercial Club (venue for our monthly meetings); AlburyCity (venue for committee meetings); Coxtech (website maintenance); KwikKopy (supply of our printing needs); and financial support from sponsors Lester & Son Funeral Directors, Baker Motors, Hume Bank, ThinkPilates, Citi Café, Elders Real Estate (Manny Gonzales) and Rotary clubs of Albury, Albury North, and Albury Hume.

To Albury LibraryMuseum Team Leader Carina Clement, museum curator Emma Williams and all the team, we again record a very sincere thank you for the many ways that they have contributed.

My sincere thanks to all committee members for your continued enthusiasm for the role we play in helping preserve our local heritage. In the past twelve months we had several retirements of long serving committee members Jill Wooding, Marion Taylor, Howard Jones, Bruce Pennay, Ray Gear and Chris de Vreeze, in all over 50 years of experience serving our committee. My personal thanks and the thanks of all Society members for all these years of dedicated support.

It has been a privilege to serve as President, a task made easier with the support provided by our general membership, your ongoing commitment to our Society is very much appreciated.



Greg Ryan