

Boomerangs and Victory Vanities

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Large numbers of the young men of Albury and district served in the military during both World Wars, many killed in action and many more injured.

Sometimes overlooked was the contribution of women folk, young and old, left behind. In September 1917 a company of young amateurs known as "The Albury Boomerangs" was formed: Misses Thelma Houston, Florrie Wilkinson, Madge Mason, Doreen Allen, Annie Butcher, Josie Carroll, Dolly Arnold, Ethel Harber, Marjorie Seymour, Doris Gale, Jessie Maclure, Gladys Davey and Ida Allen.

Their aim was to provide entertainment in aid of patriotic funds. They first appeared at Albury's Mechanics' Theatre (known later as the Plaza Theatre) on November 15, 1917, in aid of the Albury Branch of the Red Cross Society.

Over the next twelve months three more Albury performances and a further 24 in district towns raised nearly £1600 (about \$148,000 in today's money).

Not to be outdone, another company of young ladies was formed during World War II. The *Border Morning Mail* in November 1939 reported that "A patriotic concert company called the *Victory Vanities* has been organised."



Victory Vanities prepare for their first concert, March 1940: From left to right: Norma Rauber, Patricia Young, Joy Prentice, Mona Carter, Marjorie Lett, Enid Cross, Constance Marshall, Dawn Collings, Margaret Dunn, Marjorie Richardson, June Hore, Moyna Smith, Nola Brown, Gloria Colley [*Border Morning Mail*, March 6, 1940].

Their first concert was at the Plaza Theatre Albury on March 12, 1940 “presented by Miss Raie Langley to assist the Albury and District War and Patriotic Fund. The function under the patronage of the Mayor and Mayoress Alderman and Mrs D G Padman.”

Raie Langley was a local business woman with a hairdressing salon in Dean Street. She had experience as an amateur entertainer during WW1. *Table Talk* told readers in May 1918 that “The Merry Eight Musical Comedy Company, under the direction of Miss Raie Langley, gave another of their successful patriotic concerts at the Mechanics’ Institute, Williamstown.”

The *Victory Vanities* became well known in the Albury district, visiting many local towns regularly and performing with song and dance at local military camps.

After six years, the company’s final concert was in August 1945. The BMM reported that in six years, the ladies had raised “£10,000 or more [equivalent to about \$750,000 in 2022] poured into the laps of patriotic organisations.”

The BMM journalist asked the question “Who and what were they? Less than two dozen of them, they represented a cross section of the beauty, the intelligence, the energy, the doggedness, the imaginativeness, the capacity, and the discipline that one would expect to find in a community of patriotically inspired Australian youth.”