

Albury's Dean Square

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Dame Mary Gilmore commented in 1924: "The Public Buildings make Albury. With a wisdom not given to all, the city fathers of the older day took all one side of the street for public offices ... and a little public square where the band plays, a fountain splashes, and flowers and palms give colour."

In 1861 Albury Municipal Council petitioned the Government "requesting that they grant the Municipality all that piece or parcel of land, containing two acres (more or less) being eastward of the Court-House and Church Reserve, and fronting the corner of Dean and Olive Streets, for a Public Market."

One year later the land had not been granted, the excuse being "that the area applied for was unnecessarily large for ordinary markets of produce."

Debate continued for many years with little reference to the land being public space. An editorial in the *Albury Banner* in 1872 asked "Is this land suitable for a market ... we should like to see the Government making an application for the whole of the Reserve for the purpose of erecting public buildings thereon."

In exchange for the old telegraph office, in the early 1880s Albury Council agreed to swap the Dean/Olive street corner of the reserve for construction of a new telegraph office which opened in April 1886.

The Square became a popular gathering place, featuring open air drama, vaudeville, circus troupes and recitals by the Albury Town Band.



Not all were happy. A Dean street businessman asked in 1911 “that steps be taken to put the square to some better use” complaining of “the merry-go-round and the accompanying hurdy-gurdy, which we have had experience of recently for about ten days and nights [and] the letting of the block to showmen and Dutch auctioneers.”

In May 1912 a surrounding galvanised fence was removed and work started on “turning the Market Square into a garden.” Council decided that a new “distinctive name” was needed and on December 19 the new Dean Square was officially opened by Mayor Alderman Allan.

Next April a new band rotunda was opened with a recital by the Albury Town Band. A plaque was affixed with the inscription: "To the Pioneers. Erected as a token of remembrance by the citizens of Albury, 1913, Lest we forget."

Over the next fifty years the Square was popular for quiet reflection, card games under shady trees and civic events.

In the 1960s the space was expanded and in 1988 became QEII Square.