

Albury & District Historical Society Inc

October 2022

No 638

Wiradjuri Country, PO Box 822 ALBURY 2640

<https://alburyhistory.org.au/>

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Mary Brickell (née Bulmer) and William Brickell

Next Meeting

Wednesday, October 12, 2022

7.30 pm, Commercial Club

Topic: Soldiers & Aliens

Speaker: June Factor

**ALBURY LIBRARYMUSEUM
UNDERWORLD MUGSHOTS
UNTIL OCTOBER 30**

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Hall Museum

PRESIDENT'S NOTES FOR OCTOBER

Our highly anticipated visit by Cesar Becerra was a triumphal success. A well attended meeting heard a very interesting address by our guest from Florida, USA. We thank our mayor, Cr Kylie King for attending and making a speech of welcome. A majority of our members and guests stayed for supper and took the opportunity to talk to Cesar about the fascinating connection between Albury and Miami. We received media coverage in the *Border Mail*, ABC Goulburn Murray and on the ABC News website nationally.

Two other events with international connections will occur in the next two months. On Saturday 22 October the Uiver restoration team (UMCT) is having an open day at their hangar at Albury Airport. A&DHS will have a stall at the event.

Late November will see the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre (Bonegilla Migrant Experience). Our members are assisting in the planning.

There have been amendments to the Associations Incorporations Act. Our Constitution will be automatically amended and the new Constitution has been posted on our website.

We are very pleased to welcome all of our new members, Mike Neville, Elizabeth & Harry Flood, Christine & Lance Paynter, Jennie Timmins, Connor Fedorowytsch, David Cotty and Patrick Mangan.

Membership Subs are due and remain unchanged. Single members \$30, Family Member \$ 35. Members requiring a posted copy of the Bulletin pay \$10 extra. Cheques to PO Box 822 Albury or Bank Transfer to BSB 640 000 A/c 111097776 (please include your name as reference).

ALBURY GIRL RECEIVING RECOGNITION AS THE “MOTHER OF MIAMI.”

Bulletin 605 from October 2019 included an article describing the visit to Albury from Miami, Florida of Cesar Becerra as part of his research into a Miami-Albury connection. In particular, Cesar is committed to researching the role that former Albury girl Mary Bulmer played in the founding of his home city.

Before moving to America, Mary had married William Brickell who, with partner Adam Kidd, had amassed considerable wealth as a businessman in Albury in the 1850s and early 1860s. At that time, Albury was still a ‘frontier town’ with no more than about 600 permanent residents. However, it was the preferred ‘Crossing Place’ of the Murray River for many hundreds of fortune hunters heading for the Victorian goldfields, and for successful gold seekers returning north with pockets full and prepared to spend some of their good fortune in Albury. Brickell and Kidd took advantage of the boom times with several successful business ventures – a punt crossing the river, publicans at the Exchange Hotel, a large retail store, a coach service between Albury to Melbourne and successful tenderers for construction of Albury’s first Union Bridge (1861).

Cesar returned to Albury in mid-September “to thank Alburians for help with Brickell research.” He supplied the following account of his research into the Brickells, their Albury connection and his campaign to have Mary’s role in the founding of Miami to be properly recognised:

Historian Cesar A. Becerra found critical information in Albury in 2019 concerning the Brickell family who would later go on to found the cities of Miami and Fort Lauderdale in Florida, USA.

Since the celebration of Miami’s 125th Anniversary on July 28, 2021, I have been criss-crossing state lines educating many about Mary Brickell and her critical and often overlooked role in birthing of my city. Slowly people are listening.

This story, that has been rattling in my mind for the past 25 years, is now told in my new book, *Orange Blossom №* . The story could not have been told without the critical understandings on both Mary and William Brickell’s time in Australia – particularly their time in Albury.

Part of that understanding began years ago with genealogists Christine Wild and Denise McMahon who found a massive amount of information on American and Canadian pioneers at the Australian diggings in the 1850s and 60s. A fuller picture became clear with the assistance of members of the Albury & District Historical Society, Greg Ryan and Joe Wooding, for which I am eternally grateful.



Cesar with his book outside the Smollett Street property used as stables by Brickell & Kidd [a *Border Mail* photo]

Welcome from Albury mayor, Councillor Kylie King

It’s an honour to be invited to the Albury & District Historical Society’s September meeting to give a special welcome to tonight’s special guest Cesar Becerra and also reflect on the close ties between Albury & District Historical Society and AlburyCity Council and by extension its crucial role in our community.

I note with great interest that the Society was formed in 1960 when Cleaver Bunton convened a meeting of town people with an interest in its history.

I was recently part of a media promotion acknowledging the Society’s 60th anniversary when the Society installed plaques on three heritage buildings, Adamshurst, Soden’s Hotel and the Commercial Railway Hotel, now stylish apartments. The idea was to recognise the owners for prioritising the preservation of the heritage nature of the buildings in recent restoration works – thank you, it was a wonderful accolade and allows visitors and locals to appreciate those buildings’ links with our history.

The Society works closely and collaboratively with many sections of Council especially the LibraryMuseum and the Town Planning Department.

I am aware that the Society’s outreach in the community includes monthly meetings, publishing a very informative monthly Bulletin, publishing books and booklets about Albury’s history, giving talks to community groups and hosting heritage walks. Many members volunteer their time at the LibraryMuseum and sit on various AlburyCity committees. On behalf of councillors and our community, I thank you.

Cesar – welcome to Albury, thank you for travelling from Florida for the occasion. It’s fascinating to read about the close ties between Albury and one of the ‘co-mothers’ of Miami, Mary Brickell and I note a bowl of that famous Florida produce, oranges, on the front table to make you feel at home.



A grainy image of the Exchange Hotel on the south-east corner of Smollett and Townsend streets.



In 1861 the first Union Bridge across the Murray River was complete. William Brickell and Adam Kidd had won the contract to construct the bridge at a cost of £7046.

was time to publish important findings, debated for years among a small group of historians. My aim was to laser focus on Miami's origin story and deconstruct how it became romanticized and simplified down to the fabled orange blossom story, the will of Julia Tuttle, and a railroad magnate named Henry Flagler. In most telling of the founding story, the Brickells, particularly Mary, have been left out.

Orange Blossom 2.0 is the result of that journey and gathering spree that has trickled slowly into an avalanche becoming hard to ignore. At the tail end of the 125th anniversary year of Miami's birth, I humbly made my way back Downunder to present my findings and read from my book about this fascinating couple who met in Albury in the 1850s and would one day venture out and birth one of the world's iconic cities, in this case, Miami.

When I travelled to Australia in 2019 and conducted more research than I anticipated, my real purpose was just "to walk in their shoes."

While in Sydney I visited the very docks where both William Brickell and Mary Bulmer landed (he from California and she from England). In

Cesar A. Becerra is a South Florida historian who has taken part in chronicling and sharing the stories of the region for two decades. He is the author of half a dozen books ranging from hiking the Appalachian Trail to the logging history of the Big Cypress Preserve. He is the former publisher of *The Everglade Magazine*, an award-winning publication printed during Everglades National Park's 50th anniversary. He has walked, hiked, slogged, canoed, kayaked, air-boated and swamp-buggied all across the Everglades. In 1997, *The Miami Herald* named him an "Everglades Evangelist." He also has a penchant for hidden history and knows no boundaries or distances when it comes to searching for it.

William and Mary Brickell returned to Albury for a brief visit in October 1900. Mary's father, Joseph Bulmer, had died in Albury in 1858 but Catherine, her mother, still lived in Albury in 1900 as did Mary's brother Joseph. Catherine moved to America with her daughter and son-in-law and died there some years later.

Joseph junior was a carpenter and timber merchant, operating from a timber yard on the south side of Swift St, from Stanley St to Macauley St. The *Albury Banner* reported in February 1912 that Joseph had recently sold that business to Frew and Logan. The Frew and Logan partnership dissolved in April 1918 with the business continuing as 'Logans.' In November 1918 the premises with plant and stock were destroyed by fire. Rebuilding on the same site, Logans continued in the timber business for many years, closing in June 1980.

In two decades of research, I and other historians have amassed new documents and proof that Mary Brickell, (originally Mary Bulmer, daughter of Albury residents Joseph and Catherine Bulmer, who had settled in Albury by way of Goulburn and before that Sydney and before that England) could very well be the most marginalized female founder in Miami history.

It wasn't until I returned from a research trip to Australia to follow in the footsteps of the Brickells that I realized it



William Brickell on the porch of the Brickell mansion, Miami, in 1906. Seated on the steps are his sons, William, Charles and George.

Goulburn I saw where Mary grew up and learned to be a seamstress. And in Melbourne I visited the church where they married then took off on an 85-day trip to the United States.

But it was in Albury where they met and William established himself with a young Mary Bulmer riding shotgun at his side learning the ropes and intricacies on what it took to build a town. William was no doubt a main mover and shaker. He along with business partner Adam Kidd owned a hotel, a store, a coach service to and from Melbourne, a river punt and even had the successful bid to build the first bridge that crossed the Murray River.

I came back to thank the many historians and friends of this project that showed me the way as well as spread the word about my findings. I also came to Albury to share a word from Mary and William's great granddaughter, Bea Brickell, who plans to visit Albury in the future.

BRUCE'S SNIPPETS

MAKING HISTORY IN ALBURY IN 1883



The Victorian Governor addressing guests at the banquet in the Albury engine shed 14 June 1883.

[*Australasian Sketcher*, 2 July 1883]

- ♦ An almost holy railway relic, the spade and barrow used at the turning of the sod of the first railway in Australia in 1850 was on display.
- ♦ Old Tom Boyd, who had crossed the Murray River with Hume and Hovell in 1824, attended the function. The 84 year old Tom Boyd enjoyed the festivities so much he went again twelve months later to the festivities at the opening of the railway to Hay, then Australia's longest railway.

Fine food and the good company of like minds needed the embellishments of the past to ensure this was an historic occasion.

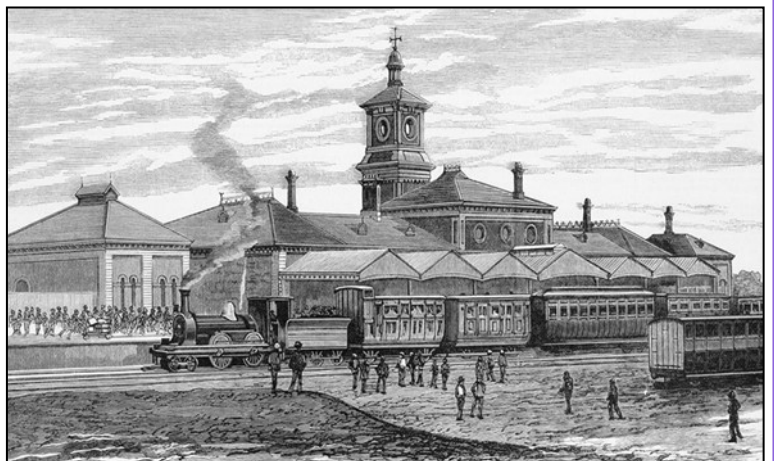
The connection of the two railway systems in June 1883 was a momentous occasion.

Two Governors, two colonial Premiers, Ministers and Members of two parliaments, prominent visitors and locals were among 1,016 men who took part in a grand banquet in an elaborately decorated engine shed boldly lit by electric light,

It seemed to Melbourne's Age newspaper that guests spoke, thought, talked and drank federation. Federation was in the air, like the coriander and other spicy aromas.

The NSW Government Printer published a book telling how the trappings of history were used to magnify the sense to occasion.

- ♦ Classical motifs appeared on the cover of the menu and a mural on the wall.



From a pen & pencil drawing by Alfred Martin Ebsworth
[*Australasian Sketcher*, 2 July 1883]



Two images illustrate the significance of the occasion as the two colonies are linked by rail.

The left hand image: *The Union of Two Railway Systems*, NSW Government Printer, 1883.

The right hand image: *Sydney Mail*, 23 June 1883.

BRUCE'S SNIPPETS (continued)

A TROVE TIP—REACHING BEYOND DIGITAL CLIFFS ON TROVE

At present Albury-Wodonga newspapers appear on Trove between 1860 and 1949. It is possible to locate some earlier local district news by doing a search within NEWSPAPERS for the phrase BORDER POST from January 1856.

Newspapers re-published reports from the *Border Post* newspaper over 2,000 times in its first four years. So, for example, *The Age* on 9 October 1856 reported a history of Albury that appeared in the first issue.

Five major preoccupations include advocacy for a railway and a bridge across the Murray; steamboat navigation of the Murray; separation from New South Wales; local gold diggings and the Chinese.

Even earlier regional district reports appear with a search within NEWSPAPERS for the word NATIVE and any words MURRAY; MURRUMBIDGEE; GOULBURN, without the word “South Australia” and best limited to newspapers in Victoria and then in NSW in the 1840s.

MUSEUMS OF HISTORY NSW ACT

In mid-September, both Houses of the NSW Parliament passed the *Museums of History NSW Act 1999*. This will absorb the former State Archives & Records NSW and Sydney Living Museums, delivering instead the Museums of History NSW.

The Act will effectively become a combined heritage property, archives and interpretation agency, as well as a much smaller State Records Authority. Its role will be primarily education and regulation of contemporary State Government record-keeping. These changes will affect the way historians go about their work in the State.

LOCAL HISTORY GRANTS PROGRAM, PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE VICTORIA

Congratulations to the Committee organizing a memorial to Sandy the War Horse. They were the recipient of a grant of just over \$6000 from the Public Record Office of Victoria. Follow the link [Local History Grants Victoria](#) for a list of all grant recipients.

HMS ALBURY, A ‘SMOKEY JOE’

Howard Jones

Among the naval ships, pleasure craft and fishing boats that evacuated some 380,000 British, French and Belgian soldiers from Dunkirk in 1940 was a rusting old minesweeper named HMS Albury. “She” was built in Scotland for the Royal Navy late in 1918, too late to serve in World War I.

In 1936 she was put in reserve in Malta but in 1939 placed back in service. A British sailor, G E McKinnon, who served on HMS Albury, told Albury Mayor Gordon Padman in 1945 that she had rescued about 4000 exhausted soldiers from Dunkirk in six trips (a researcher later estimated 1850).

She continued as a minesweeper until 1945, one of the few coal-fired minesweepers known as ‘Smokey Joes.’ The ship survived a German bombing raid in the North and a collision with another British ship, and took part in the Normandy landings on D-Day, 1944. After the war, a Belgian company converted her to a merchant ship.



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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCDzIPypinJegksrO-lzssVg>



VALE FRANK HIGGINS

Frank Higgins, a foundation member of our Society in 1960, died in Canberra on September 5, aged 96. Remarkably, he retained unbroken membership until his death.

Frank was born in Sydney and worked for Sydney County Council before war service in the RAAF. In 1956 he married Dorothea (Dot) Cassey. The same year he came from Sydney to join Hume Shire Council. For most of the next 30 years he was deputy shire clerk, once joking he enjoyed it because it meant “meeting a stream of fascinating characters.”

Frank and Dot raised nine children in the Catholic faith. They were founding members of Holy Spirit Parish and Frank its first secretary. After retirement in 1986 and later moving with Dot to Orange, Frank's interest in Lavington parish and our Society never wavered. Frank wrote the parish history book in 1995.

Many Society members recall Frank as an entertaining speaker and Bulletin contributor and a long-time minute secretary for our committee. RIP.

Howard Jones

HALL MUSEUM

Society member Peter Harper recently visited the Hall Museum and strongly recommends a visit if you are in the Canberra district. The museum is in the former Hall Primary School, Palmer Street. They are open every Thursday morning from 9am to 12 noon and every Sunday afternoon from 12 noon to 4pm or by appointment (02 6230 9630).

The main exhibition is a journey through time and space from Ginninderra to Hall. 'Ginin-ginin-derry' was an aboriginal locality, first traversed by Europeans in the early 1820's and settled by them from around 1826.

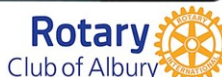
For more information, visit their website at <https://museum.hall.act.au/>



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Meetings: Second Wednesday of the month
at 7.30 pm usually at the Commercial Club
Albury.

The Committee meets on the third
Wednesday of the month at 3 pm
at the Albury LibraryMuseum.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Single: \$30 Family: \$35

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Note: There is a \$10 surcharge for
mailed Bulletins.

Research undertaken, \$25 first
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