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Next Meeting

Wednesday, April 12, 2023

7.30 pm, Commercial Club

Topic: Managing Old Bridges

Speaker: Mitchell Judd



Our members witnessed restoration of the Uiver Memorial DC-2 continuing to progress in the hangar at Albury Airport

ALBURY LIBRARYMUSEUM
'Serving Country'
Aboriginal & Torres Strait
Islanders in the ADF
Until June 25

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PRESIDENT'S NOTES FOR APRIL

I want to give a big thank you to Russ Jacob and his merry team of helpers for their warm hospitality at "The Hangar" for our March meeting. We were treated to a nice dinner, singing and interesting presentations. The Uiver people were chuffed to also have in attendance as our guest, Phil Robertson, grandson of Sir Macpherson Robertson.

We have a strong appreciation of the valuable work being performed by the Uiver restoration team and they have our full support. We will help them where we can. The DC-2 aeroplane being reconstructed was, for a time, based in Miami, Florida and flew the Miami-New York route. When Cesar Becerra read on Facebook that we were to meet at the Uiver hangar he posted "Tell the folks that Miami wants to help."

Coincidentally our members Claire and Tom Doolan will be in Miami later this year and Cesar has arranged to take them on a boat trip. We look forward to hearing their report on their return.

Engineer Mitch Judd will be our guest speaker in April. He will explore some of the issues around management of heritage bridges in the 21st century, what should be preserved and what it takes to keep heritage bridges in service. The historic Barham Koondrook Bridge will be used as a case study.

On another note, I feel I need to flag a growing issue with regards the distribution of the hard copy Bulletin by post. The cost of printing and posting the Bulletin has risen steeply in recent months. I will have more to say on this at our next meeting in April which will be back at our usual venue, the Commercial Club Albury, at 7.30pm.

THE UIVER MEMORIAL RESTORATION PROJECT

Jenny Romero

Albury & District Historical Society's March meeting took a different format. Thirty-five members and guests made their way to the Uiver Memorial DC-2 Restoration Project at 7 Bristol Court, Albury Airport for a 6.30pm start, a BBQ dinner provided by the Uiver Trust and an update on the progress of the restoration of the plane and the museum project.



"The DC-2 will become the centrepiece of the Uiver Memorial Living Museum which is being developed alongside the DC-2" said Russ Jacob, the current director of the project. Both the restoration and the living museum are huge tasks and can only be achieved with the help and support of the community.

Russ explained to our members the "Buy a Rivet" fund raising project, the bequest of an aviation library of over 1000 books, each book on sale for \$5.00 and events like "Opera in the Hangar" held recently.

After Russ detailed the forward planning of the project, Society members were entertained by John Hengstmengel,

singing in Dutch with his wonderful bass voice, a song his mother used to sing to him about the Uiver when a child. The song is called "King of the Sky."

Our members were treated to a tour of work in progress on the restoration of the DC-2 with the hardworking volunteers explaining the process of restoration. The enthusiasm and the dedication of the volunteers was on display. Whilst still in bits with some parts untouched an 'assembly' line system could be seen in the restoration process.

One member, Peter Harper, explained that the repairs to the 'skin' is made up of strips of aluminium (aircraft grade) all about 25cm in width but of varying lengths following a set process. All are labelled, inspected for damage and corrosion and where possible removed to be restored by straightening, cleaning and then polishing ready for repositioning with the temporary rivets. The temporary rivets gave the 'skin' an air-like appearance.



'Opera in the Hangar' March 2023
[photo supplied by UMCT]



Left: a badly corroded section of the DC-2



Right: the same section after restoration.

The polishing produced a very shiny surface that Peter thought would easily reflect the sun. The rear part of the plane seemed to be mostly restored with the 'skin' shiny and fixed with the permanent rivets, all very aircraft-like. Forward of this could be seen the strip fixed in position but still requiring cleaning and polishing while in other areas the strips were missing.

Albury & District Historical Society took along a guest, Phillip Robertson, grandson of Sir Macpherson Robertson whose famous air race gave Albury the Uiver story. The Uiver volunteers were excited to meet Phil who was very generous with his time, staying back an hour after the meeting to talk to the Uiver volunteers and

to share his vast knowledge of the MacRobertson Trophy Air Race.

The key issue for Sir Macpherson Robertson in sponsoring the race was to deal with Australia's geographical isolation. He sought to demonstrate how, through commercial aviation, Australia could be brought closer to Europe and America. This is why he was particularly pleased to have the KLM aircraft, with passengers and mailbags from Europe, successfully complete the race.

Sir Macpherson had promised a donation of £100,000 towards the 1934 'Melbourne centenary' program. The Lyons Federal government saw an opportunity to apply a gift tax, which it calculated at £42,000. Sir Macpherson demonstrated his commitment to the cause by paying the tax himself. The centenary organising committee received the full £100,000 of which £15,000 was applied to the London to Melbourne race.

The members who attended the meeting commented that it was a great evening. The volunteers of the Uiver Trust were very welcoming and appreciated the big attendance of members and guests and the support they have received from our Society.



'MOVING PICTURES' ARRIVE IN ALBURY

Greg Ryan

An *Albury Banner* article in June 1896 marvelled at the invention of the 'cinematograph' – "Imagine a room or theatre brilliant with electric lights and decorated with an empty back-cloth. Suddenly the lights are extinguished, and to the whirring sound of countless revolutions the back cloth quivers into being. A moment since it was white and inanimate; now it bustles with the movement and masquerade of tremulous life. Whirr! And a train, running (so to say) out of the cloth, floats upon your vision ..."

The first record of 'moving pictures' in Albury appears in the *Albury Banner* in January 1897: "The Cinematograph was exhibited last night at the Mechanics' Institute to a large and appreciative audience, who exhibited the most lively interest and approbation of the marvel submitted for their approval. In all twenty views were shown, the best of which probably were the approach of the railway train and the ballet dancing of Madame Rosa ... those who have not yet seen this wonder should not miss the opportunity."

The following August, also at the Mechanics' Institute, 'Lumiere Cinematographe' exhibited what "was the best exhibition of the kind seen in Albury" including Queen Victoria's jubilee procession just a little over two months earlier. "The pictures were exceedingly clear ... and when the Queen went by the audience showed their loyalty by cheering."

In July 1900, a *Banner* article under the heading 'Theatograph' told readers that "The exhibition given at the Mechanics' Institute on Saturday last by Mr Wybert Reeve, was the best of the kind that has been seen in Albury ... the figures presented on the screen are life size, and the movements, despite a certain amount of 'shakiness,' are natural and lifelike ... the programme including incidents in connection with the Transvaal war, recent cricket contests between England and Australia, and an excellent collection of comic sketches, each telling its own story, and telling it in such irresistibly humorous fashion that the spectators must laugh whether they wish to or not."

Travelling film shows started visiting Albury in the early 1900s. But it was a far cry from what we experience at the cinema in the 21st century. Early film goers had to sit on hard seats, sometimes just a plank supported at each end. They would then try to focus on

FEDERAL THEATRE, ALBURY.
Sole Lessee & Director ... Mr. PHILIP NEWBURY.
RE-APPEARANCE
FOR TWO NIGHTS ONLY,
Tuesday & Wednesday Next,
Of the famous
NEWBURY-SPADA COMPANY
In conjunction with the most improved
CINEMATOGAPHE
Hitherto introduced to Australia,
TUESDAY EVENING NEXT, 6th MARCH,
Magnificent Popular Programme and
up to date & Unique Views,
BY THE
CINEMATOGAPHE
ON WEDNESDAY EVENING NEXT, 17th
MARCH,
In Celebration of St. Patrick's Day,
The Gems of Irish Songs and
Irish Music,
BY THE
NEWBURY-SPADA COMPANY,
And especially prepared beautiful IRISH
SCENES and VIEWS by the
CINEMATOGAPHE.
POPULAR PRICES — Two Shillings and One
Shilling.
Box Plan at Mr. P. W. BLAKE'S, Bookseller.
No extra charge for booking seats.
HUGO FISCHER, Manager.

Albury Banner advert, March 12, 1897, for possibly Albury's first commercial film night at the Federal Theatre, NW corner of Kiewa and Stanley streets

shadowy, ill-lit screens screening film shot with primitive equipment and tolerate frequent breakdowns of projection equipment. Subject material was very limited with no sound to accompany the images.

M ECHANICS' INSTITUTE,
ALBURY.
Direction of Edwin Geach.
POSITIVELY THREE NIGHTS ONLY
Starting
WEDNESDAY, MAY 9.
En Route from Sydney to Melbourne.
The Greatest Show on Earth
WEST'S PICTURES Incomparable,
WEST'S PICTURES THEY
WEST'S PICTURES Simply Stand
WEST'S PICTURES Alone.
Musical Treats THE BRESCIANS.
Also
Mighty Living London.
POPULAR PRICES: 3/, 2/, 1/. Plan
at Blake's.

Border Morning Mail, May 2, 1906

exceptionally good films were the 'Modern Highwayman' and 'Two little Waifs' – the latter causing a distinct tendency to tears among the womenfolk, but ending in an orthodox and satisfactory manner."

The Mechanics' Institute hall in Dean Street was the principal venue for film shows in the early years but after 1910, open-air venues became popular during the summer months.

The first local open-air theatre, the Olympia Theatre, opened in December 1910, built by William Malcolm, pastry cook and caterer. He built on land next to his shop and between the Globe Hotel and the Albury Club in Kiewa Street. West's Pictures were the first tenants. The theatre provided for 1550 patrons. Elevated platforms at the eastern end provided 250 of the best seats costing 1/6. In front of the platforms were 650 seats costing 1/- and close to the screen a further 650 seats for sixpence each. The theatre had an iron screen 30 feet square onto which was projected a 25 feet square (about 7.6 metres) picture. Albury was not connected to the electricity grid until 1916 – power to light the theatre was supplied by the generator of Rankin's Globe Hotel next door.

Films in 1910 were all quite short. The main feature on Olympia's opening night was "a stirring portrayal of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'" supported by a further eight films.

EMPIRE PICTURES
GRAND OPENING
TO-NIGHT,
Programme :—
DRAMATIC—Sins of the Father, Cosette, Musicmaster to Highwaymen, The Postman, Twixt Red Man and White (cowboy).
HUMOROUS.—Paddy Has Eaten Sponge, Hair Restorer, Misfortunes of a Carpet Seller.
SCENIC.—Toilers on the Sea Shore.
INDUSTRIAL.—Clock Making.
ILLUSTRATED SONGS.
POPULAR PRICES, 1/6, 1/ and 6d.

Border Morning Mail, May 30, 1910

One of the earliest to exhibit 'moving pictures' in Albury was West's Pictures travelling film show. They started visiting Albury regularly from mid-1906 showing short films, often as part of a larger program including musicians, acrobats and magicians.

The *Border Morning Mail* (BMM) announced West's arrival on May 2, 1906: "Next Wednesday a high-class entertainment of biograph pictures and music entitled 'West's Pictures and the Brescians,' will open at the Mechanics' Hall under the management of Mr Edwin Geach. Mr J T West, who has revisited England has just returned with new films for his animated pictures of 'The World Day by Day,' a panorama of passing events combined with peeps at the beauty spots of the earth, and new fairy and comedy subjects. The Brescians' group consists of nine artists of approved merit in the leading halls of the United Kingdom."

A week later the BMM noted: "Of the pictures it is sufficient to say that they are first-class in every way ... The best film shown last night was the magnificent series of 'Living London,' a liberal education as to the life, manners and ways of the greatest city ever known. Other

West's Olympia.
KIEWA-STREET.
PROGRAMME FOR TUESDAY NIGHT.
West's Pictures.
The Grea. Medal Competition (comic).
THE GEISHA (dramatic).
The Pathe Gazette (topical).
AN UNSKILFUL SKATER (comic).
The Italian Guards (military).
THE FLAG OF COMPANY H. (dramatic).
Football in a Lion's Cage (comic).
INTERVAL
Over the Alps in an Aeroplane (comic).
UNCLE TOM'S CABIN
Tontolini in Love with the Cook (comic)
PRICES.—6d., 1/, and 1/6. Chairs may be reserved at the Mechanics' Institute at any time without any extra charge.

BMM, December 13, 1910

James Scanlan, of the Albury plumbing firm and formerly of the Albury Cycle Agency, started the Empire Picture Company in May 1910. The company had to provide their own electric generator and film projector. They screened films most weeks at the Albury Mechanics' Theatre and Wodonga Shire Hall. An early film night by the company featured the "most notable pictures, 'The Warrnambool to Melbourne Road Race,' and 'A Drop of Water, a scientific study.'"

Scanlan caused quite a sensation in 1911 when he engaged "a young lady" to walk across the stage in a harem costume. The BMM assured readers that "owing to great difficulty in persuading the wearer to don the harem skirt her name would not be divulged, and she wore a mask."

In late 1911 Scanlan secured approval from Council to construct an open-air theatre in Market Square (now QEII Square). The theatre provided seating for 350 patrons though over 650 locals purchased tickets for their first screening in January 1912 of “No fewer than three splendid ‘star’ films, namely, ‘Life on the Border,’ ‘At the Break of Dawn,’ and ‘The Ruling Passion.’”

In January 1914, the BMM announced that local businessman Abe Nathan “has purchased the plant and equipment of Empire Pictures” and J H Nathan and Leslie Bell formed Paradise Pictures. They had a short season at the Olympia but there were few film nights at the Olympia after that, no doubt World War I being a big part of the reason for the decline.

In the mid-1920s, a new open-air theatre opened at the back of the Theatre Royal in Kiewa Street. Operated by the Lee Tet family, it became known as the Royal Garden Theatre.

The open-air experience remained popular for some time but Hoyt’s Regent Theatre opened in February 1927. That was the same year as the release of ‘The Jazz Singer,’ the first feature film with synchronized speech as well as music and sound effects. The picture revolutionized the motion-picture industry. Patrons now preferred the indoor film experience with superior projection and sound equipment as well as more comfortable seating. By the mid-1930s an open-air film screening had become a novelty experience.



The open-air Royal Garden Theatre

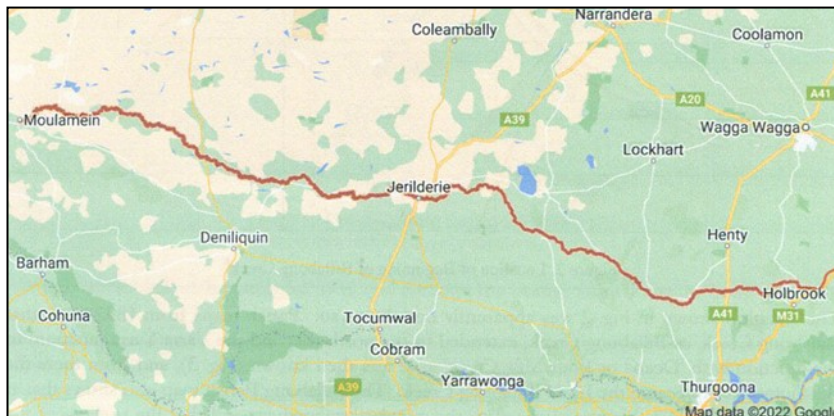
BILLABONG CREEK

Greg Ryan

Information and illustrations for this article were taken from a 46 page book entitled “Billabong Creek and Little Billabong Creek, NSW: what’s in their naming?” and published here with permission of the author, Bruce W Strong of Deniliquin.

Bruce points out that naming of ‘places’ in NSW lacked coherence from colonial times until the mid-20th century, the ‘Sydney Morning Herald’ noting in 1905 “a sort of go-as-you please practice ... in spelling names of places in NSW.” The book is available in the History Collection at the Albury LibraryMuseum.

Billabong Creek is said to be the longest ‘creek’ in the world. Wikipedia describes Billabong Creek as “a partly perennial stream of the Murray River catchment within the Murray-Darling basin, is located in the Riverina region of NSW.” It is “formed by the confluence of the Yarra Yarra Creek and Little Billabong Creek ... north of Holbrook, and flows generally west, northwest, joined by sixteen minor tributaries before reaching its confluence with the Edward River, at Moulamein. The creek descends 252 metres over its 320-kilometre course.”



From source to mouth, the creek passes through the towns of Morven, Culcairn, Walbundrie, Rand, Jerilderie, Conargo, Wanganella and Moulamein.



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Little Billabong Creek extends north for 32 km beyond the Yarra Yarra Creek junction. However, early Parish maps show the source of Billabong Creek going beyond the junction, extending north to the junction of 'Deans or Four Mile Creek.' This appears to have changed after 1892.

"Billabong" is defined in an online Wiradjuri Dictionary as: *Billabong/bilibang* – billabong, a branch of a river forming a backwater or stagnant pool, made by water flowing from the main stream during a flood; also a name for the Milky Way.

Bruce goes on to outline alternative origins of the word and early instances of its use. Among early use of the term, explorer Thomas Mitchell used the name 'Billibang' in his 1836 Expedition Journal. He refers there to a map of 1817 produced by NSW Surveyor-General John Oxley, Mitchell noting a river course "as shewn on Mr Oxley's map; but a small watercourse, then dry, and named Billibang, skirts the eastern side of the hill."

The first confirmable form of the name came in the NSW Government Gazette of February 1, 1837 – a list of 'Pasturage Licenses' records the issue of a license in the district of "Billy Bong Creek" to Therry J J of Campbelltown. Therry was Fr John Joseph Therry a pioneering Catholic priest. He held the lease on the Yarra Yarra run at the head of the Billabong Creek, north of Holbrook (see the reference to his "Billybung lease" in an extract from *Friday Mount* by Margaret Carnegie at [Friday Mount extract](#)).

The author then goes on to outline usage of various spellings of the word Billabong in newspapers, Government Gazettes, maps, journals etc. Alternative spellings he highlights include: Billibang, Billy Bong, Billybung, Billebong and Billabung.



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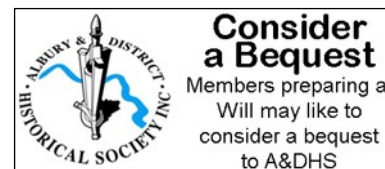
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